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United Nations A/56/PV.41

General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

41st plenary meeting
Thursday, 8 November 2001, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 23 *(continued)*

United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/523)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.3)

Mr. Sun Joun-yung (Republic of Korea): Allow me to begin by expressing my delegation's appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for preparing the draft resolution entitled "Global agenda for dialogue among civilizations" (A/56/L.3). I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for preparing a succinct yet informative report, and his Personal Representative for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, for his tireless efforts to promote the spirit of dialogue among civilizations. In particular, we commend him for launching yesterday the book entitled *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*, the fruits of a two-year collaborative effort undertaken by 18 members of the Group of Eminent Persons.

Last year we ushered in the new century with great confidence and high expectations for the years to come. This optimism derived from the anticipation that, with the end of the cold war, barriers among nations would erode and economic prosperity would spread around the globe, aided by the information technology revolution and the onset of globalization.

The reality, however, is that the benefits of globalization and the information revolution have been unevenly distributed throughout the world. In addition, thanks to rapid advances in telecommunications technology, different civilizations now interface more frequently than ever before, but this generally occurs in an asymmetrical manner. Such developments have inevitably produced side effects, which may shed more light on the economic disparities and diverse perspectives that exist among various regions belonging to different civilizations.

Rather than allow the information technology revolution and globalization to drive a wedge between civilizations, the international community should take advantage of their potential to enhance contact among diverse groups. To do so, we should devise a normative framework that would foster the spirit of tolerance and understanding through expanded contact among people.

In this context, the Government of the Republic of Korea appreciates all the initiatives taken by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran since 1998. We believe it would be a very welcome and fitting step to adopt the draft resolution on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations during the very year the United Nations has designated for such dialogue.

Looking back upon a succession of recent conflicts, it becomes evident that many conflicts can be attributed to a lack of communication and consequent misunderstandings between different groups, be they

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national, ethnic or religious. However, we need to beware of those who exploit such differences and diversity for political purposes, particularly those who espouse hatred under the guise of safeguarding civilization. Those are the people who draw fault lines between civilizations. To prevent such fault lines from becoming more deeply inscribed, dialogue among civilizations should be more vigorously encouraged in the future.

In conducting such dialogues, no one can deny that a spirit of tolerance and an acceptance of diversity are essential. Unless guided by the spirit of tolerance, increased contact among people in the era of globalization might arouse fear of those who are different. If left unchecked, such fear can turn into hatred. In this regard, dialogue among civilizations has become all the more important in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September.

As indicated in the preambular part of the Global Agenda, we should not lose sight of the fact that interaction among civilizations has enriched humanity throughout history. In fact, rich diversity among the world's civilizations can and should be an asset and a stimulus to mutual development, rather than a source of conflict.

Although an acceptance of diversity and a spirit of tolerance are essential ingredients in any dialogue among civilizations, we cannot deny the existence of certain universal values. These universal values are the embodiment of the collective wisdom, insights and experiences emanating from different civilizations over the course of humankind's long history. In some sense, they provide fertile soil in which diverse seeds from different civilizations can together be planted and encouraged to flourish. At the same time, my delegation would like to stress that dialogue does not mean appeasement of the arrogance of power or of the blind courage of ignorance. Rather, dialogue should be based on the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

In this context, my delegation believes that the United Nations serves as a unique forum where a broad array of civilizations, represented by Member States, can pursue dialogue, accepting diversity as well as universal values. We appreciate the efforts that the United Nations system, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has made so far to foster dialogue among civilizations. Furthermore, we believe that long-term projects promoting dialogue and tolerance in the fields of education and culture should be further encouraged throughout the United Nations system. While we recognize that the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations will come to an end in less than two months, we hope that the momentum gained throughout the Year will be sustained and revitalized in the years to come.

Having consecutively inherited Buddhist and Confucian civilizations in the past, and more recently elements of a Christian culture, the Korean people consider themselves well equipped to engage in a dialogue among civilizations on the basis of their enriched cultural and spiritual heritage. Indeed, the Korean Government held a successful seminar on dialogue among civilizations in Seoul last year, in cooperation with UNESCO.

The Republic of Korea looks forward to making more constructive contributions to the cause of dialogue among civilizations in the years to come.

Mr. Moushoutas (Cyprus): The Charter of the United Nations considers dialogue to be a means of harmonizing international relations and resolving differences among States. It places dialogue at the highest peak of human endeavours, for the promotion of peace and the solution of international problems. The item under consideration aims at these lofty goals, as well as at strengthening the bonds within and among civilizations, emphasizing the common destiny of humankind. Promoting cooperation, interchange, tolerance and understanding among peoples, and coexistence among countries, cultures and religions, is not only a good policy; it is also an imperative choice for survival.

Our societies and our cultures are not, and cannot be, isolated entities. A local crisis in a place far removed from our borders or shores unfailingly and immediately affects us all. We are part, it seems, of the same global village, where our actions or omissions, our deeds or misdeeds, are affecting everyday life everywhere. And here lies the contradiction of our present day: instead of drawing closer to each other in this interdependent world, we continue to experience much conflict and human misery from segregation, separation and divisions.

The twentieth century has been marked more by rivalry than by cooperation. It has been rightly

observed that the majority of conflicts in which United Nations peacekeeping operations take place are based on ethnic, tribal or religious grounds. Separatism, especially militant separatism, forms one of the root causes of conflicts in our world. As the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations has said,

> "Just as, during the 1990s, many who went to war used the threat of diversity as a justification for conflict, perhaps in the future those who seek peace will use the spirit of dialogue among civilizations as a means to move forward". (*A/54/546, annex, para. 14*)

Common sense dictates that the calamities we have brought upon ourselves should be avoided, and that peace and cooperation should replace confrontation and conflict. To achieve that goal we must institutionalize dialogue among peoples of different cultures and civilizations. As the Secretary-General notes,

> "It is the perception of diversity as a threat that is at the very origin of war." (*A/55/492, para. 4*)

The many positive and mutually beneficial interactions among civilizations and the mutual enrichment of civilizations must be cultivated and form the basis of educating the young, especially children. We are all part of creation, linked by common destiny and facing a challenging future. It is time for the beauty of integration and peaceful coexistence through diversity to be promoted and further addressed. Tendencies to portray specific cultures as threats to peace must be rooted out of our teaching and schoolbooks.

In this United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, we celebrate the unity and diversity of mankind. We agree that our survival ultimately depends on our success to promote tolerance as the accepted mode of behaviour, despite the obstacles of intolerance and aggression. Again, let us not forget Mr. Picco's words:

> "History does not kill. Religion does not rape women, the purity of blood does not destroy buildings .... Only individuals do those things."

It is through dialogue that my Government is committed to solve the problem of Cyprus. We strive for a peaceful solution through which the two communities on the island may live in peace and harmony, as they did for centuries in the past without occupation troops and barbed wire.

It is with those thoughts in mind that we have again co-sponsored draft resolution A/56/L.3, which was pioneered by the Islamic Republic of Iran and also co-sponsored by a great number of Member States representing every regional group. It contains all the elements for promoting dialogue among different civilizations. It underlines the importance of inclusion and the enhancement of mutual understanding and provides a programme of action for cultural, educational and social events by Governments, regional groups and non-governmental organizations.

In that regard, we commend the initiative of the visionary and wise President of Iran, Mr. Mohammad Khatami. To the members of the Permanent Mission of Iran to the United Nations, which undertook the heavy task of promoting this lofty cause within the United Nations, we extend our deep appreciation, while we welcome among us the Group of Eminent Persons.

Mr. Kerim (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): The decision of the General Assembly contained in its resolution 53/22, of November 1998, to proclaim the year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations was undoubtedly wise and most appropriate and, as such, well received across the world.

It is not only the conceptual underpinnings of the dialogue among civilizations embodied in diversity and tolerance that justify the presence of this topic on the agenda of the United Nations; it is more than that. It is the need to mark the beginning of the third millennium of mankind with a great cross-fertilization of cultures, to use an expression from the charter of the Académie Universelle des Cultures in Paris, adopted when that multinational organization of artists and scientists was established a few years ago.

Being in New York one does not need to undertake a journey in order to convince oneself of this true and visionary assessment. Here in New York we see a reorientation of the melting pot concept in practice. Perhaps it would be better to say that a cross-fertilization of cultures exists: different cultures living shoulder-to-shoulder. Some ethnic groups have merged with one another, others have kept themselves separate — living in different districts, speaking different languages and following different traditions.

Yet all come together on the basis of some common laws and a common lingua franca, English.

Without even wanting to speculate about the real intentions of the perpetrators of the assault on 11 September in lower Manhattan, one might think of an attempt to challenge these values and way of life. Watching the replay of the cataclysmic pictures of the collapsing World Trade Center Towers, one could ask, Where is civilization heading? Will barbaric acts of terrorism provoke the opening of new gaps among people, nations and religions or widen already existing ones?

In order to prevent dissension along the worldwide front, one thing must be clear in the decisive battle against terrorism: no religion, people or region should be targeted. However, the main goal must not be compromised, namely, to subdue international terrorism.

As the Secretary-General aptly pointed out in his report,

> "A dialogue among civilizations is not only a necessary answer to terrorism — it is in many ways its nemesis. Where terrorism seeks to divide humanity, the dialogue aims to unite us." (*A/56/523, para.19*)

On the other hand, we have to be aware of the fact that the world we live in is far from perfect. Some people believe there is a struggle between globalization and cultural diversity. Other people fear they will be left behind in this great global process. These fears are not groundless.

Recognizing these fears, political leaders, as well as international organizations, including the United Nations, have realized that we cannot hand over the world to market forces alone. Recently addressing the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), French President Chirac said,

(*spoke in French*)

> "Cultural diversity is the way to counter the standardization of cultures produced by globalization. Diversity must be based on the conviction that each people has a specific message to the world, that each people can enrich humanity by contributing its share of beauty and truth."

(*spoke in English*)

With such an approach in mind, we would like to emphasize that globalization cannot be separated from democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, individual liberty, social justice, respect for different groups and communities and respect for cultural identities.

This implies that, if globalization is to be governed by global principles of ethics and democracy, it is necessary to follow a course that leads to no other destination but worldwide progress. It is therefore the duty of political leaders and all other people in positions of power to civilize the process of globalization to ensure that the interests of people — of all people — prevail.

Examples are the best means of conveying a message in a convincing manner. In terms of the scope of the dialogue among civilizations and its worldwide dimensions, allow me to cite some examples. Is it not a common challenge for all societies, regardless of their religious background, cultural roots or national traditions, to generate sufficient opportunities for all young people to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity?

Let me also cite another example. A genuine dialogue between cultures and faiths could help the protagonists find their way to peace and a prosperous future. Who does not remember the bitter experience of the inter-ethnic clashes in the Balkans during the last 10 years? Ethnic cleansing or the destruction of religious sites were integral parts of these conflicts. Unfortunately, we have been witnessing them in other parts of the world, too.

These are serious warnings. Even in the age of highly sophisticated information and communication technologies, mankind is suffering from the same atavisms of the past, typical of medieval times or the Crusades. In terms of mankind's history, there is also the other side of the coin. During the period between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries, Jews, Christians and Muslims participated in flourishing examples of scientific, artistic, medical and philosophical endeavours.

It is of particular importance to stress that the dialogue among civilizations must play a crucial role in overcoming every type of fundamentalism and

integralism, as the two most obvious societal forms of intolerance, regardless of their religious roots and backgrounds.

My country, the Republic of Macedonia — being a unique incarnation of the turbulent and manifold history of the region of south-eastern Europe where Hellenic culture and Roman civilization left numerous traces; where down through the ages Christianity and Islam fought for predominance; and where Slavic, Greek, Albanian, Roman and Turkish ethnicities have been interwoven — had more than good reason to be among the sponsoring countries of resolution 55/23 on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, adopted by the General Assembly on 13 November 2000.

We welcome the activities undertaken by the personal representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, working together with the Director-General of UNESCO, along with a number of Governments and eminent persons, various civil society organizations and representatives around the world, to further the dialogue among civilizations through a series of organized manifestations, projects, gatherings, workshops, conferences and other events.

The Salzburg dialogue among civilizations, a new paradigm of international relations to be continued next year; the Vilnius International Conference on Dialogue among Civilizations and the Declaration adopted on that occasion; the International Conference on the Dialogue of Civilizations in Tokyo and Kyoto; the International Seminar and the Tehran Declaration on Environment, Religion and Culture adopted on that occasion; the twenty-first century forum-symposium on dialogue among civilizations held in Beijing are a few examples.

In accordance with the programme of action within the global agenda for dialogue among civilizations envisaged in draft resolution A/56/L.3, the President of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Boris Trajkovski, intends to undertake an initiative to host a conference or seminar on dialogue among civilizations, in the framework of UNESCO, in the year 2002 in Ohrid, Macedonia.

In view of the follow-up measures, as well as the prospect of dialogue among civilizations, we must give special attention to the work of the Group of Eminent Persons established by the Secretary-General, which has completed its work. The authors have embarked upon a daring mission focusing on the elaboration of a new paradigm of international relations. The reassessment of the concept of enemy, alignments based on issues rather than ideology, the concept of stakeholders and, finally, the decision-making system based on equal footing and individual responsibilities are certainly crystallizing this new paradigm. Not only does the intellectual endeavour of the Group deserve our full respect, but we also respect it for making the dialogue a more than attractive field of discussion.

The basic values and principles of a multipolar and interdependent world differ substantially from the one in which the United Nations was created. A unilateral implementation of the concept of enemy, or alignments based on issues according to the new paradigm, would require a reconsideration of the United Nations Charter or, at least, of some of its basic principles. To conduct a dialogue along these lines would not only engender a new paradigm of international relations, but would also imply the breaking of a taboo when it comes to the grass roots of our Organization. On the other hand, one could rightly pose the question: Are we really eager to make the United Nations a permissive Organization, bearing in mind the clear commitment enunciated and underlined in the Millennium Declaration to principles that have proved timeless and universal?

In terms of the goal of dialogue, the ongoing discussion concerning the equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council may be the most convincing landmark. It shows that building something together takes time and requires stamina, determination, courage and wisdom, thus becoming at the end of the day the real form of dialogue.

Let me conclude by stressing that, eventually, we all have to strive for inner courage and wisdom to help design an inclusive world in which diversity is perceived no longer as a threat, but as an element of progress in the growth of our civilization.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to convey the feelings of the State of Qatar regarding this debate on the dialogue among civilizations.

This is a timely debate, given current conditions in the world. It is timely not only because of the new millennium that has just begun — a new era in which we had hoped there would be an increase in

understanding and awareness — but because of the violence that is affecting most of the world. The previous century may have been one of the bloodiest in history. The new century has begun with some of the most violent events imaginable.

The new millennium is suddenly reflecting the familiar face of violence, hatred and anger. Is it not time for policy makers in this culturally, technologically and scientifically advanced era to study thoroughly the essential elements of the concept of culture, civilization and dialogue, and to acknowledge that such elements represent security and peace for people throughout the world today?

There is an urgent need for humankind to ensure moral solidarity at the global level, and for dialogue among civilizations to be accepted by all peoples as a means of understanding their common cultural, social and religious values. Such moral values are, in their turn, the foundation of human solidarity. They will enable us to better understand the basic causes that force human beings to inflict pain and suffering on their brothers and sisters.

In the context of such human solidarity and the need to identify a global vision based on international humanitarian law and respect for human rights, this dialogue can help to resolve conflict among all human beings, whether individuals or groups. Unfortunately, despite our cultures, technological resources and tolerant religions, the world today is faced with many more problems than it has solutions.

We need a long-term vision and policies to help us to tackle the new conditions in the world. Today, many countries are being torn apart by armed conflict, extreme poverty and disease. Given the tragic circumstances surrounding us, therefore, how can we undertake a dialogue among civilizations?

We need to begin such a dialogue if we are to face up to contemporary challenges such as terrorism and its causes. We need to lay the groundwork to enable future generations to develop a positive vision, to tackle existing conflicts and make dialogue among peoples our priority.

Do we need war, conflict and terrorism, including State terrorism, to remind us of this? We must defend peace. And we must make every effort to create peace, instead of just maintaining it. We must prevent crises before they occur. It is up to us now to promote a dialogue among civilizations, to establish a culture of peace and to learn, first and foremost, to live in peace with ourselves and with one another so that we can tackle threats to peace and prosperity throughout the world.

The recent terrorist attacks and their negative consequences for international human and religious relations remind us of what was believed in the 1990s regarding a clash among civilizations. We must therefore pursue dialogue among civilizations and ensure interaction between different cultures so that concepts can be better analysed and harmonized and we can reaffirm the values that certain extremists are trying to keep us from sharing. This meeting has acquired special importance since terrorism as a global phenomenon and a political movement has been attached to Muslims and Arabs, who have become the favourite guilty party in the eyes of the West. All we need to do is consider the information in the Arab and other media to become aware of the fact that third world countries are being pushed to total paralysis. The world — particularly the Arab and Islamic world — is faced with an intensification of the conflict of civilizations from the religious and ethnic point of view.

Global appeals for a cultural dialogue among civilizations are becoming stronger. The United States could become a leader of such a dialogue, because it is a country of great cultural diversity and could set an example in the area of social coexistence.

The State of Qatar will not be party to conflicts between civilizations, religions and ethnic groups.

The General Assembly should play a leading role in supporting human solidarity and promoting dialogue among civilizations and peoples for the benefit of international peace and security. Islam considers murder to be an abominable crime and has encouraged dialogue between civilizations and religions. We need to undertake dialogue to resolve crises, ensure that justice reigns and avoid condemning particular ethnic groups, nationalities or religions.

The Islamic religion tells us not to resort to terrorism and not to kill human beings unjustly. Such acts have nothing whatever to do with religion or nationalities. We must support the principle of dialogue among civilizations and the underlying principles of international law and human rights. These are principles shared by all peoples and civilizations.

We live in a united, though multidimensional, world of different cultures and nationalities. The Governments that do not heed their people will not be successful. That is why we must listen to the voices of our citizens, the voices of the people, whether through civil society, non-regional or non-governmental organizations or through the United Nations system.

The terrorists who have spread death and destruction do not share our view of the world. They are filled with hatred and do not represent any religion or any nationality; they represent only themselves and their narrow political causes.

The international community should ask itself whether it has properly protected its patrimony of wisdom, experience and duties. We must save humankind from the evil that it has created, and we must look to history to learn lessons. We must safeguard the resources that we will leave to future generations, particularly the need to respect international moral and legal criteria and the principle of dialogue among civilizations, ensuring that such dialogue replaces the conflict among civilizations and the future becomes the age of reason, wisdom, peace and security.

Improvements in communications systems have brought major advantages for all future generations because they enable us to exchange ideas and achieve peace. Today we are in a unique position to expand the dialogue so that it can become a genuine dialogue among civilizations throughout the world.

Information technology and progress in means of communication and transportation have made the dialogue among civilizations a necessity in our world. Globalization will be welcomed as a positive process once all peoples and civilizations are involved in dialogue rather than confrontation.

The cold war and the decades-long conflict between the East and West have come to an end. But suddenly we are faced with another type of conflict: the conflict between the East and West, some say, will be replaced by a conflict between the North and the South and between the rich and the poor. This is why we must avoid at all costs an increase in conflict between civilizations. The dialogue among civilizations is very important if we wish to achieve the objectives of eliminating racism and racial discrimination and consolidating human rights through cooperation and understanding.

In this respect, we must remember that diversity is a source of strength and not a cause for division. As the Holy Koran says,

> "O mankind! We created
> You from a single (pair)
> Of a male and a female,
> And made you into
> Nations and tribes, that
> Ye may know each other
> (Not that ye may despise
> (Each other). Verily
> The most honoured of you
> In the sight of Allah
> Is (he who is) the most
> Righteous of you." (*The Holy Koran IL:13*)

Ignorance of the values of others or of their religions, and attitudes of supremacy and bigotry are not the view of the Koran. Almighty God created men and women to cooperate with each other and with humanity as a whole for our common benefit. This encourages us to recognize the rights of others and to appreciate their values and convictions based on justice, equality and noble principles and ideals, as well as to try to eliminate all obstacles created through misunderstandings and mutual suspicions. The dialogue must be global and allow all to participate in the creation of a culture of world peace.

Qatar, based on its domestic experience and recognizing the genuine need to create an environment favourable to an international dialogue among civilizations, fully supports the concept of a dialogue instead of a clash among civilizations. The appeal launched by Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, at the round table held last year, to hold in Doha one of the three meetings of the Group of Eminent Persons led by Mr. Giandomenico Picco, Personal Representative of Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, is clear proof that the State of Qatar fully supports this concept. Indeed, the third such meeting was held in Doha on 5 September 2001.

In this respect, Qatar would like to welcome the Tehran Declaration resulting from the fifth session of the Islamic Conference of Information Ministers, held in Tehran on 1 and 2 December 1999. We also welcome the global document on dialogue among civilizations and the substantive activities undertaken by the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The second

meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts responsible for preparing an Executive Work Programme on Dialogue among Civilizations was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on 23-25 September 2000. We have also supported the global document for dialogue among civilizations and the draft Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations.

The dialogue we aspire to should be an open one involving all civilizations without exception. It should be based on the attempt to understand the concerns, interests and objectives of others. It should be a dialogue aimed at creating peaceful coexistence, free from all forms of racism, exclusion, enslavement of others or interference in the internal affairs of other States. It should include cultural divergences and differences and be aimed at creating a real future for humanity. It should be a frank and sincere dialogue that will produce understanding and tolerance and that will renounce violence, hatred and aggression. The dialogue among civilizations should also affirm the legitimacy of the purposes and principles of the United Nations, strengthen the idea of dialogues and discussions, and allow us to move forward in the area of human rights, environmental issues and other issues of concern to all of us.

We reaffirm the role of the United Nations in increasing awareness among the peoples of the world of the concept of a dialogue among civilizations in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Pradhan (Bhutan): The dialogue among civilizations is a unique item on our agenda. In fact, we are of the view that in many ways the entire range of discussions and interactions within the United Nations family between different peoples, cultures and ways of life also constitute part of such a dialogue.

In my view, most of the effort and work of the United Nations should have the objective of pursuing peace and security through the non-violent resolution of disputes, no matter how difficult they may seem. These efforts should also contribute to promoting tolerance and understanding among races, religions and cultures. Above all, the objective should be to accomplish peaceful coexistence among nations, peoples and their respective civilizations.

Whether we talk about a dialogue among nations or civilizations, there has to be a basic premise and understanding from which we can continue such an interaction. How could we describe such a premise?

First, in our view, all civilizations taking part in such a dialogue have to subscribe to and faithfully practise the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, especially in their dealings with each other. This would mean that they exercise utmost tolerance, whether in respect of race, colour, religion or levels of socio-economic development. They must consider each other equals and equal partners on this planet and, above all, decide to interact with the objective of living in peace with each other.

History has shown us that peoples have gone to war in attempts to wipe out or dominate each other in the name of religion and civilization. Some have taken such a course simply to conquer territory. The colonization of peoples and their lands, the enslavement and exploitation of people of other races and colour, and conflicts over political ideology and religion have all led only to gross injustice, suffering, violence and terrorism.

A great awareness dawned after the Second World War, when nations emerging from the ashes of the death and destruction wrought by increasingly modern weapons decided to establish the United Nations, in order "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." Unfortunately, we are still some way from achieving this laudable goal.

If one race, religion or culture considers itself superior to another, and perhaps even harbours hatred and the intention of destroying the other, if it has a "we-versus-them" attitude, there simply cannot be a genuine and peaceful dialogue. This would lead not to a dialogue between civilizations but to a clash of civilizations.

It is my understanding that civilization arises out of human evolution, through the acquisition of higher values, knowledge and the experience over centuries by peoples of diverse races and religions. It also consists of the experience gained through dealings between civilizations as well as the ironing out of differences and the smoothing over of rough spots. Rarely does civilization emerge in a state of total isolation.

Hence civilizations and their beliefs and practices cannot be expected to remain static. Civilizations must be dynamic. Long-held views and beliefs, however dear or final they may seem to us, sometimes are not

tenable in the context of today's global village. Practices that harm others and that stunt the full potential of individuals, including one's own people, and belligerent views that give rise to conflicts have to be changed or abandoned, so that all can live in peace and cooperate to achieve common human goals.

In conclusion, I reiterate that peaceful coexistence can be achieved only when civilizations learn to adapt to changing times, peacefully to resolve differences with others, and give up violence, terrorism and warfare. As we witness what is happening in the world around us, we can see that we still have to learn how to live peacefully with each other. The terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September and the developments in Afghanistan have made this glaringly clear.

It is hoped that this dialogue will bring to the fore issues that need to be looked at more closely by the international community and that it will lead to peaceful coexistence and cooperation.

In our view, this should be the ultimate objective of the dialogue among civilizations.

Mr. Hønningstad (Norway): This dialogue among civilizations aims to encourage interaction, in its most diverse sense, among and within countries, nations, cultures and religions. This is an excellent way of promoting pluralism and tolerance, as well as the participation of civil society in processes of governance.

Technology, migration and integration are bringing people of different races, cultures and ethnicities closer together, breaking down old barriers and creating new realities. The ongoing process of globalization entails an intensified intercultural interchange. At the same time, today's communication opportunities present a tremendous challenge for us, in terms of increasing our ability both to understand and to make ourselves understood.

We would like to stress that the dialogue must also encompass indigenous peoples and cultures. In this regard, dialogue among civilizations should also become a vehicle to promote and ensure the enjoyment by indigenous peoples of their rights, in concert with the indigenous peoples themselves.

Alongside the world's rich variety of civilizations, cultures and groups, there is a global civilization based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which we are all called on to defend and promote. This global civilization can thus be characterized by its insistence on universal human rights and freedoms, its tolerance of dissent, and its belief in the right of individuals everywhere to have a say in how they are governed. It is a civilization based on the belief that diversity is something to be celebrated, not feared. Indeed, many conflicts are fuelled by people's fear of those who are different. Only through dialogue can such fears be overcome.

It is our belief that the concept of dialogue among civilizations naturally and logically leads to an affirmation of a value that increasingly unites us all: the universality of human rights. The United Nations itself has done a great deal to establish a culture of dialogue, and the world community has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to a shared existing ethical foundation. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that Governments have the primary responsibility for ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This year has been designated as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Norway welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the prospect of dialogue among civilizations and the activities pertaining to the Year, as well as all the preparations and concrete initiatives that have already taken place and those that are planned. We note with satisfaction the work undertaken by Mr. Giandomenico Picco as personal representative of the Secretary-General.

Dialogue can help us distinguish lies from facts, and propaganda from sound analysis. In the light of the attacks against the United States on 11 September, the need for global dialogue and an international commitment against terrorism must lie at the heart of all our activities. Terrorism transcends national borders. It strikes at the core of the values that we hold to be universal and independent of our cultural backgrounds and religious affiliations. Like the people of New York, who stand united in grief, bravery, and determination, so must we, the international community, stand united in confronting international terrorism.

We must stand firm in rejecting any threat against the United Nations, the main meeting place for dialogue in the world. As the concept of a dialogue

among civilizations must be based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, the fundamental challenge for us as Members of the United Nations is to strive for peace and security while never tolerating terrorist attempts to destabilize the global values represented by this Organization.

Mr. Navarrete (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation would like to convey its gratitude to the Secretary-General, to his personal representative for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, both for the submission of the various reports and documents which are enriching our debate today and for the personal and institutional commitment that they have demonstrated in promoting a lofty and relevant initiative: the promotion of a dialogue and of understanding among civilizations.

We are also grateful to the enlightened Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for having proposed the introduction of this very important topic for discussion, as well as for having initiated consideration of a draft resolution, the broad sponsorship of which augurs well for its adoption by consensus.

The atrocious terrorist acts of 11 September and their consequences for the political and economic areas and for international peace and security, among others, make it even more urgent to make dialogue a constant, permanent and favoured tool in attempting to resolve the differences arising out of our diversity at all levels: local, national, bilateral, regional and global.

The subject that we are examining today, complex in itself, includes both directly and indirectly concepts, such as culture and civilization, that are distinguished by their changeability, evolution and diversity as well as by the complexity of their interactions.

We know that culture, in its broadest sense, is everything we possess as living beings through learning from or imitating our fellow human beings. Language, food, dance, clothing and everything that we have learned form part of our culture. The term is extremely broad. There is not and cannot be a human community without culture.

Civilization is something else. The concept comes from the Latin word for city. It has two principal aspects: the mode of understanding the universe and its manifestations in art, religion, science and technology, among others; and the mode of social organization, especially the State and laws. To civilize means to subject to reason, to apply the rationality of thought, religion or law.

In this context, just as there is not and cannot be a human community without culture, there can be and are uncivilized communities. Where there is no rationality, there is no civilized life.

On the other hand, dialogue, or the confrontation of different positions, is the best way to clarify a problem, to shed light on what is uncertain. In this sense, Plato said thought is a dialogue with oneself; in the intimate and solitary act of exercising thought, there is a hidden dialogue. This is because thinking is tied closely to presenting arguments, explaining, giving reasons.

But it is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to understand oneself without subjecting one's own arguments to the scrutiny and objections of others. Here again we see the link between dialogue and thought. To think is to engage in dialogue.

Seen from this point of view, dialogue among civilizations is a paean to diversity and pluralism. Diversity in both the biological and human worlds is rich and creative. Diversity is life; it is, as scientists say, order. On the other hand, in the uniform and global one cannot identify what is particular and different from the rest. What makes the story of humanity fascinating is that each of us is different. The same can be said about history: each nation is different, with peculiarities that distinguish it from the rest.

Therefore, the only way in which we can enrich ourselves both spiritually and materially is to reach out to what is different — other perspectives and views. Dialogue, for its part, presupposes respect for the diversity and peculiarity of the other. It is not a matter of erasing diversity or of unifying by cancelling. Incorporating means adding together what is diverse, conserving its distinctive peculiarity as it becomes part of one common goal.

The example of Europe is illustrative. Europe was always a cauldron of cultures: an enormous diversity of peoples in a territory that was not very large. As a result, European cultures made notable progress where they lived together, next to one another. In contrast, as the Mexican writer Octavio Paz pointed out, the

greatest difficulty for the development of pre-Hispanic cultures in what is now Latin America was their total isolation and lack of dialogue with each other.

Different cultures and civilizations can understand each other only by engaging in dialogue. Understanding a civilization means nothing more than grasping it as a similar response — of the same kind but with specific differences — to the needs and ideals of the civilization known to us. In other words, dialogue means making a civilization different from ours become our own.

When dialogue fails and understanding of a different civilization does not result, we tend to view that civilization as totally different from us, and often hostile. There is not much distance between lack of understanding, hostility and conflict. Confrontation, from this point of view, is a result of the failure of mutual understanding — the breakdown of dialogue. Confrontation encompasses the desire to destroy what we cannot understand. Lack of understanding, the breakdown of dialogue and the will to destroy go hand in hand.

Proof that dialogue among civilizations is not easy can be found by looking at human history as a whole. Conflict and war between various groups have perhaps been more common and frequent than peace and harmony.

The perpetual peace of which Immanuel Kant spoke remains an ideal to be attained. If there is human moral progress — which, despite everything, seems certain — it should be reflected primarily in the effort to understand, through dialogue, cultures and civilizations different from ours that appear before us.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to express its full agreement with the observation, contained in the Secretary-General's report, that cultural and religious diversity is a source of strength and not a cause of division and conflict. My delegation also shares the belief that the United Nations — this forum — continues to be the natural place for the dialogue among civilizations, the forum where that dialogue can flourish, be fruitful and help achieve the objectives of maintaining peace and promoting human development.

Mr. Lancry (Israel) (*spoke in French*): In this General Assembly discussion devoted to the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, I thought it appropriate to include in my statement a brief introduction in Arabic.

Of course, my mastery of classical Arabic will forever remain imperfect. Having acquired the rudiments of this language during my Moroccan adolescence, I am trying, at the United Nations, to update the distant echoes that carry the magic of yesteryear back to me. Therefore, in tribute to the language of my youth, I have decided to include this fragment in Arabic as a miniature illustration of our discussion.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I wish to begin my statement in Arabic as an expression of the dialogue between cultures and civilizations. In my country, the Arabic language is considered the second official language.

I consider myself fortunate to be able to read and write in the beautiful Arabic language, but unfortunately that is not enough. My effort to learn Arabic is one of the incentives for contact with and respect for this language, which is part of my culture, as I was born in Morocco.

I am fully confident that the dialogue among languages and cultures in our region will help create the necessary language of peace, not only to achieve political peace, but also to sow reconciliation and coexistence among the peoples of the region. As the saying goes, by spreading one people's culture to another, the stupidity of war will be avoided.

(*spoke in French*)

In our preceding statements on the dialogue among civilizations, we have, in the context of general consensus, indicated our unreserved support for, and desire to participate actively in, the dialogue.

With regard to the State of Israel, the modern incarnation of an ancient people, the shared foundations of three monotheistic religions and their scriptural, spiritual and intertextual manifestations are a generating force for dialogue and openness.

The history of humanity, based for too long on negating the other, on the supremacy claimed by a philosophy, an ideology, a race, a culture, a truth or a revelation, is a history in which man has been destroyed in the most appalling disasters.

Throughout the centuries, the implacable antagonism between civilizations, the superimposition of one culture on another, the attempts by one race to obliterate another have been tragic tendencies, a source of chaos and misfortune in our world.

On this list of disaster marked by the subjugation of man by man in the name of triumphant ideologies, some bright periods, some sustained peaks, guided humankind towards salvation. The Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Judeo-Arab Golden Age in medieval Spain, the thousands of years of Jews living in the Maghreb, the ancient Egypt of Joseph or that of the wise men of Alexandria, the Persia of Cyrus and Darius — dialogue and respect for diversity were the driving forces of these peak periods of our civilization.

In diversity harmoniously lived, the differences are interwoven without being nullified; they flourish, without one rising at the expense of the others. They often converge to introduce new differences. It is in these median areas that differences of cultural crossbreeding emerge, where borders transform into vibrating membranes that thwart closure and isolation. In order to intensify the dialogue among civilizations, we must cross our own mental borders, pierce our ideological walls and dig tunnels under our ramparts of inhibitions, so that the best of ourselves can first ooze and then spurt liberating words.

It is through contact with areas of cultural mixture, at the intersection of diverse areas, histories and civilizations, where dialogue and understanding are possible, that mankind is able to trace its future in peace.

In a world that is prey to isolation and Manichaean divisions such as those that produced the horror of 11 September, a living and diversified dialogue among civilizations is the antidote to fundamentalist terrorism and its nebulous carriers of death, destruction and suicidal impulse.

After the unspeakable disaster of 11 September, there is an urgent need to extend the dialogue among civilizations and promote interfaith dialogue. This is a responsibility that is incumbent first and foremost on the family of nations and on its spiritual, political and intellectual leaders. The chief Organization, the United Nations, led by a visionary Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his remarkable Personal Representative for the dialogue among civilizations, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, are useful —indeed, essential — catalysts in this vast and valuable project for our century.

Mr. Abelian (Armenia): I would like to begin by expressing to Mr. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, my country's respect for the devotion with which he pursues the vision of a dialogue among civilizations. Our appreciation and respect also go to the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, for supporting this initiative and promoting it within the United Nations system.

Initiatives like the one we are addressing today appear on the international agendâ at very specific times in human history. At the threshold of the new millennium, which undoubtedly will be the millennium of human expansion into the universe, there is a growing understanding that the human race can no longer be weakened by cultural, religious and ideological differences. Such differences should instead be turned into an inexhaustible source of strength, inspiration and new ideas. A dialogue among civilizations is both a sign of mankind's maturity and an instrument for its progress.

In fact, the entire concept of a dialogue among civilizations leads us to the realization that there exists only one human civilization, which is extraordinarily rich and diverse, as exceptionally manifold as the human species itself. Therefore, a dialogue among civilizations will eventually evolve into the self-knowledge of humanity, without which the human quest for perfection will never be accomplished.

In today's world, more and more people have begun to realize that they belong to more than one civilization. Multiculturalism has become a reality, and it can grow to become a universal standard for cultural self-identification in the twenty-first century. Of course, this process should not be artificially accelerated or enforced. The unfortunate reality that several mini-cultures and micro-civilizations vanish each decade from the face of our planet, even in remote and hardly accessible regions, cannot be perceived as a necessary and unavoidable sacrifice on the altar of globalization. There are, and will be, societies and groups of people for whom cultural globalization can be, or already has been, very painful. The international community must respect the right to cultural self-determination in the same manner as the right to political self-determination. There are small ethnic groups in today's world which, despite their modest

demographics, are the living heirs of great past civilizations. Many of them are forgotten and neglected. Some are endangered in their own homelands, such as, for example, the Assyrians, who keep alive the Aramaic tongue of Jesus Christ. Such ethnic and religious groups should be regarded as the cultural heritage of all mankind, and a special approach should be taken to their needs and aspirations.

But there is opposition to dialogue of a completely different kind, which springs from a notion of cultural superiority. Calling others "inferiors", "barbarians" or "infidels" is a sign of cultural insularity, which provides fertile soil for ethnic and religious intolerance and far too often manifests itself in acts of violence and terrorism. It is regrettable that during the International Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations we suffered the unspeakable horror of 11 September. This tragedy has revived the ill-fated theory about a clash among civilizations, which seems to have acquired many new adherents. The seriousness of this theory should not be underestimated. We should be honest with ourselves, and we have to admit that the clash is no less real and no less likely than the dialogue. It is a serious threat, and it is a bold challenge to the adherents to dialogue and to the United Nations itself. It is up to all of us to determine the possible course of human history. In this regard, we would like to mention the valuable contribution to the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations made by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held earlier this year in Durban, South Africa.

The lesson that we must learn today is simple: political actions and military operations can destroy training camps and terrorist infrastructures. They can bring to justice the persons responsible for crimes against humanity, but they cannot destroy completely the ideology motivating them and poisoning their minds with hatred. This is where initiatives like the dialogue among civilizations can prove to be effective. But the dialogue should not limit itself to high podiums and scientific conferences. It should find immediate and effective ways to reach out to ordinary people in the streets, who are often dangerously influenced by extreme nationalists and religious fanatics.

The concept of a dialogue among civilizations is new and still very fragile. Secretary-General Kofi Annan rightly noted that even the discussion of the dialogue among civilizations can be conducted in such a way that it actually reinforces barriers to dialogue instead of bringing them down. During the last session of the General Assembly, we already witnessed some attempts to use this agenda item for negative propagandistic purposes. We strongly reject such moves and urge all Member States to spare no efforts in preserving the original hate-free nature of this initiative.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I represent a country that may be considered a success story of interaction of cultures and civilizations. Being the heir of the great ancient civilizations of eastern Anatolia, Armenia later developed a culture that bore remarkable similarities to neighbouring Zoroastrian and Greco-Roman civilizations. A Christian nation since 301 A.D., and speaking an Indo-European language, Armenians are naturally attached to Europe culturally, spiritually and linguistically. At the same time we have a deep knowledge and understanding of the neighbouring Islamic civilization, which we have learned to respect during centuries of coexistence and active interaction. We want to confirm once again from this podium our strong commitment to the idea of a dialogue among civilizations, which promises a much better future for humanity on this small planet.

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): Let me begin by expressing appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report in document A/56/523 and to the eminent persons who contributed to the publication of the book entitled *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*. My delegation would also like to recognize the foresight of President Seyed Mohammad Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran on this initiative. Likewise, we would like to take this occasion to recognize the financial contribution that has been made by the Government of Switzerland to the trust fund established for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

The celebration of this United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and the many activities that have taken place indeed encourage us. As a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multilingual country, Indonesia embraces the need for tolerance and understanding through dialogue. The Year was marked by a peaceful transition of power and a further strengthening of the democratic process in Indonesia

and the beginning of a more stable era. We therefore fully subscribe to the basic principle that the necessary political will must be exercised to ensure a dialogue among the groups concerned in society and that it must be carried out at the local, national, regional and international levels. Moreover, the dialogue among civilizations should become a soft tool of diplomacy that will ultimately prove cost effective and successful in our joint efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate conflict, violence and terrorism.

Our own political problems in Aceh, the Maluccas and Irian Jaya provinces are being duly addressed through dialogue. The Government of Indonesia does encourage a free exchange of views through a free press. Various groups in our society are working together to solve the problems of globalization and economic uncertainty. Dialogue is alive and well in Indonesia.

Integral to that effort is the contribution made by non-governmental organizations in particular, and by members of civil society. It is our experience that these bodies can be effectively utilized as venues for dialogue between groups representing different constituencies and as mechanisms for building confidence and trust.

Indonesia is also of the view that it is imperative to have such a dialogue at the regional level, where it can contribute to confidence-building measures and create an atmosphere of understanding. I would recall that the Declaration of the Tehran seminar on dialogue among civilizations did emphasize, among other things, that the dialogue can enhance our mutual understanding and knowledge about different cultures, should enhance cooperation in addressing threats to global peace, security and well-being, and should enrich the promotion and protection of all human rights.

At the global level, Indonesia's commitment to the dialogue among civilizations is appropriately reflected in our co-sponsorship of the Global Agenda and its Programme of Action. The task now is to ensure that the necessary financial resources are made available for a successful implementation of the Programme.

My delegation joins others in the belief that the United Nations is the natural home of the dialogue and the only multilateral forum where it can flourish and manifest itself in genuine and concrete achievements. Through the framework of the United Nations, we are confident that the dialogue among civilizations will become the new paradigm of international relations for the twenty-first century.

Our commitment to the venue of the United Nations for this purpose is, we believe, vindicated by the tragic events of 11 September 2001. The tremendous loss of life and the subsequent unfolding events lend added importance and urgency to the role of this Organization in seeking internationally acceptable solutions to issues of peace and security and in promoting development, in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Indonesia will continue to contribute to the success of that effort and to the success of a dialogue among civilizations.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. We shall continue to hear speakers in the debate on this item tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.

United Nations A/56/PV.42

General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

42nd plenary meeting
Friday, 9 November 2001, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Agenda item 25 (*continued*)

United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/523)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.3)

The President: At this meeting of the General Assembly, we are discussing what the United Nations should and can do to promote understanding and dialogue among civilizations. The General Assembly, recognizing that this question is closely bound up with issues of peace and security, economic prosperity and human rights — which are central to the work of our Organization — has taken up and considered the item since the fifty-third session in 1998.

Since then, the General Assembly has adopted several important resolutions regarding this item and the Secretary-General has reported on the implementation of the resolutions. However, as we near the end of the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, I believe it is appropriate and timely for the General Assembly to provide a strong impetus for further progress in this vital area. In particular, we expect that the draft resolution entitled "Global agenda for dialogue among civilizations" will be adopted by consensus after today's debate. It is my view that the global agenda, if adopted, will mark a milestone in our efforts to promote dialogue among civilizations.

Over the course of millennia, humankind has developed and nurtured a wealth of cultures and civilizations. From the beginning of history, they have interacted with and enriched each other, while contributing to the progress of humankind as a whole. As globalization accelerates and is driven forward by advanced technologies, the process of cultural interaction and exchange is also accelerating.

The United Nations designated the year 1995 as the United Nations Year for Tolerance and proclaimed 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Indeed, tolerance and dialogue should be included among the core values of the international community. Without them, peace and security cannot be achieved and would hardly be worth achieving. Moreover, they are instrumental to the pursuit of human rights and human freedom.

We find ourselves at a critical juncture in history. Along with the advent of the age of globalization, terrorism has now surfaced as the major threat to international peace and security. Terrorism represents the very embodiment of intolerance. All great civilizations and religions in history have preached tolerance and compassion. Dialogue among civilizations, by promoting tolerance, undermines the basis of terrorism and thus contributes to global peace and security.

In our globalizing and increasingly interconnected world, diverse cultures can provide a needed source of stability and continuity. The challenge is to balance this need against the risk of

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cultural stagnation. There is no simple solution, but we must always remember that cultures are living, evolving entities, not lifeless artefacts. I hope that this is one of many important lessons that the dialogue has taught us.

In this regard, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the eminent persons from all over the world who have come here to address this Assembly. I thank them very much. I have no doubt that their presentations will do much to make this dialogue one of the United Nations foremost contributions to cross-cultural understanding.

In closing, let me express my gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its initiative in proposing this agenda item. I wish all the participants a very productive and successful dialogue, thus advancing the goals and ideals for which the United Nations stands.

I call on the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: It is a special pleasure for me to join the General Assembly for a debate on a subject of profound moral and political significance to the United Nations. If ever one doubted the need for a dialogue among civilizations, let them doubt no longer. 11 September made the need for such a dialogue crystal-clear.

That is why our response — the response of the United Nations — must be to bring nations, cultures and civilizations ever closer together through dialogue and cooperation. Throughout history, civilizations have grown and flourished through dialogue and exchange, learning from other cultures and finding new inspiration to pursue knowledge and understanding.

The dialogue among civilizations is a central pillar of the global response to conflict and violence of every kind, particularly when it is based on bigotry and intolerance. With this dialogue taking place in every part of the world, appeals to war will be met with appeals to compromise. Hatred will be met with tolerance. Violence will be met with resolve. A dialogue among civilizations is humanity's best answer to humanity's worst enemies.

I wish to pay tribute to President Khatami of Iran for launching the dialogue among civilizations within the United Nations and to other leaders and Governments who have sustained this dialogue over the last year. By doing so, they have not only advanced an essential vehicle of understanding, but served the noblest aims of the United Nations. Over the last year, the idea of a dialogue among civilizations has engendered wide interest in academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and wherever people have sought to find common ground.

From Austria to Costa Rica to Egypt, Mali, Korea and many other countries, Governments and civil society have joined United Nations agencies in advancing this dialogue and bringing its message to every culture and continent. A special contribution has been made by the Group of Eminent Persons, as the President has indicated, and I would like to congratulate them on their service to humanity and to the United Nations. I thank them very much.

The dialogue among civilizations is based not on the premise that we, as humanity, are all the same or always in agreement, but rather on appreciation of the fact that we represent a diversity of cultures and that our beliefs reflect this diversity. The idea that there is one people in possession of the truth, one answer to the world's ills, or one solution to humanity's needs has done immense harm throughout history. We need look no further than the composition of this great Assembly to know — as an unmistakable, incontrovertible fact of life — that there are many ways of living, many beliefs, many cultures.

It is when this diversity of identities is under siege, when a way of life is denied, when the basic freedom to live as one chooses is threatened, that conflict, violence and suffering become inevitable.

The dialogue among civilizations, in this sense, is not an expression of hopes, but a reflection of the world as it is. Diversity is the basis for the dialogue among civilizations and the reality that makes dialogue necessary. We understand as never before that, however diverse we are, we are fully human and fully worthy of the respect and dignity that are essential to our common humanity.

We recognize that we are the products of many cultures and memories; that tolerance allows us to study and learn from other cultures; that our strengths lie in combining the familiar with the foreign; and that those who perceive diversity as a threat deny themselves and their societies the best of humanity.

All of us have the right to take pride in our particular faith or heritage. But the notion that what is

"ours" is necessarily in conflict with what is "theirs" is both false and dangerous. In contrast to what some would suggest, we can love what we are without hating what we are not.

Of course, there are often profound and very real issues of self-determination, security and dignity at stake in the relations between peoples. Words alone will not resolve them. But a dialogue of words and deeds — that is, of reciprocal actions based on respect and a genuine understanding of the other side's grievances — can resolve disputes and prevent conflict.

I am not saying that this dialogue will be easy. But we must not allow the difficulties we will face to deter us from pursuing it. I am convinced that it can make a genuine difference in the lives of ordinary men and women throughout the world. Ultimately, that is the standard by which this dialogue will be measured: its ability to help alleviate suffering and protect the fundamental human rights of future generations.

The dialogue among civilizations has a purpose and promise beyond the challenges we face today. Throughout history, such dialogue has fostered understanding and compromise, and can do so to an even greater extent in a world that is ever smaller and more closely linked. It can support and sustain every effort at peace and every attempt to resolve conflicts between and within nations.

It is my hope that, in the months and years ahead, all nations will join this dialogue and make it genuinely valuable by placing it at the service of the weakest and most vulnerable of our world: the victims of intolerance, bigotry and hatred. It is for their sake that the dialogue among civilizations must succeed.

President Khatami (Islamic Republic of Iran) (*spoke in Persian; English text provided by the delegation*): In the circle of those who cherished rational thinking 2,500 years ago, Socrates would employ the method of dialogue to discuss philosophical questions. Those who, unlike the philosophers, felt less love for wisdom yet showed more passion to possess it — that is, the sophists — did all they could to defeat Socrates, and when his life was found to contradict their interests and credibility, they eventually had him put to death.

The call to dialogue, however, did not die with Socrates. In places of learning and places of worship, as well as in forums on world politics and culture, we can still hear Socrates inviting us to dialogue. That appeal transcends realms of formal learning and philosophy, for Socrates was more than a philosopher. He was, indeed, a great mentor of morality and a master of culture and politics. It is precisely for this reason that dialogue presupposes and embodies a principled moral discipline of culture and politics.

Today, as in ancient centuries, engagement in dialogue requires wisdom, discipline and goodwill. Today, as then, any exclusive claim to absolute truth needs to be relinquished. Truth, as absolute as it is in its essence, should drive us, in the light of its true unity, not only to recognize plurality in human culture, religion, language and race, but also to embrace this variety as a unique opportunity for establishing peace, freedom and justice in our world. In order to do this, we will need to stop playing deaf. Devastating wars have always erupted when one party has refused to listen to what others have had to say.

When Iran proposed the idea of dialogue among civilizations in the General Assembly, few foresaw how soon this proposal could be so instrumental in saving the world from an imminent war of carnage and devastation. The horrific terrorist attacks on the United States of 11 September were perpetrated by a cult of fanatics who had mutilated their own ears and tongues and were able to communicate with perceived opponents only through carnage and devastation. A perceived need for revenge, coupled with a misplaced sense of might, could lead to failure to hear the calls of people of goodwill and the cries of children, women and the elderly in Afghanistan, whose lot in life has been no more than to suffer a prolonged death in the shadow of perpetual horror, hunger and disease.

In the opening years of the twentieth century, some prominent political thinkers rightly prophesied the imminence of a century of war and revolution. This was later attributed to the escalation of violence in the twentieth century, and violence was seen as a characteristic common to both wars and revolutions.

War, of course, is always concomitant with violence. But it would be incorrect to identify all revolutions with violence. One could cite examples of revolutions based on the very renunciation of violence. Apt consideration of the liberation movement in India should suffice to patently rebut such a claim. The Islamic revolution in Iran, which in a sense breathed

the soul of morality back into the body politic, was also a revolution that responded to bullets with flowers and did not combat its opponents exclusively with retaliation and revenge. It was the Government that emerged from our revolution that eventually, in the closing years of the twentieth century, proposed to the United Nations the idea of dialogue among civilizations.

I am grateful to this august body for embracing this proposal; to the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative for their invaluable efforts; and to the Group of Eminent Persons for its thought-provoking and insightful contribution in its recently published book, *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*.

I am also pleased to introduce, on behalf of the co-sponsors, the draft resolution (A/C.1/56/L.3), "Global agenda on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, which has been prepared in a true spirit of dialogue. We hope that this important document receives the unanimous support of the General Assembly.

Regrettably, the dawn of the new millennium has turned out to be bloody and filled with gloom. The apparatus of terror and violence did not pause for a moment. A most brutal and appalling crime has been perpetrated against American civilians.

In the name of the people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I have firmly and unequivocally condemned this inhuman and anti-Islamic act of terror. I have already asked the Secretary-General of the United Nations to bring together heads of State to set an agenda for combating terrorism and to unify international political will in uprooting this evil phenomenon. This moment provides the most opportune time to reflect upon the causes and means of this catastrophe.

In our world today, the concept of political seclusion transgresses the boundaries of morality and falls into the realm of impossibility. All cultures, civilizations and faiths are now compelled to inhabit the same world by the inviolable verdict of technology. Now is therefore the best of times to bring about harmony and foster empathy amid diversity. A rare opportunity has now presented itself, which could lead either to interminable war or to enduring peace and compassion among human societies.

Terrorism is begotten through the ominous combination of blind fanaticism and brute force, and it always serves a systematized illusion. In spite of the propaganda it utilizes and the nomenclature it employs, terrorism is nothing more than a projection of the destructive forces of the human unconscious.

Should human beings be deprived of compassion and divested of morality, religious spirituality, a sense of aesthetics and the ability to engage in poetic visualization, and should they become incapable of experiencing death and destruction through artistic creativity, then the horrendous hidden forces of the unconscious would wreak havoc, death and devastation upon the world of humanity.

Whoever chooses to reduce religion, art or science to a destructive weapon bears no other than an inimical relationship to them.

In the intellectual world of Iran and Islam, magnificent achievements attained in the realm of literature are all rooted deeply in the rich resources of the divine revelation and Islamic tradition. For instance, such an understanding of tradition would be expressed by a Muslim mystic saying:

> "From the East to the West, should any one man be hurt by a thorn in his finger or by a stone in his way, I would feel the pain. My heart would share the burden of any heart encumbered with chagrin."

In the same way, the essence of religious spirituality is expressed by a poet writing in the Zen tradition: "If I had had a black cloak large enough, I would have covered all the needy of the world."

Human beings are capable of unbounded love. This is shown in the Gospels, which present the love between neighbours as on par with the love of God. The Upanishads teach that the human soul, the lily of the heart, grows from the soil out of which all human beings have been created. Precisely because of the homogeneity of this common soil, which cannot be moulded by politics and geography, empathic dialogue among human beings is possible.

A Manichaean perspective on world geopolitics, which dualistically assumes one religion to be the source of light and the other the source of darkness, would have appalling political and security consequences. The ancient trick of "making enemies"

is a product of paranoid illusion, but its products are nonetheless real.

Another question remains to be elaborated: in what soil would the seed of enmity and the making of enemies grow and produce such unpalatable fruit? It is evident that the seed of infinite enmity grows well wherever infinite injustice is entrenched and begets utter despair and frustration. Politicians and military generals could simply attribute the recent catastrophe in the United States, as well as all terrorist atrocities and casualties in various regions, to the evil deeds of a certain State, group or religion. Yet this would simply amount to evading the question, not answering it. The correct answer to this question, like many other correct answers in philosophy and politics, has a long history. However, a long history does not provide a remedy in and of itself. We can hope to learn a new lesson from an old answer only if we are prepared to accept the verdict of fairness and justice.

Injustice is neither unknown to nor confined to particular communities. However, when injustice accumulates so much that it engenders despair and frustration, it turns into an explosive brew. Only when people are deprived of a right to life — merely life as survival, not even a good life of equality — do they become capable of perpetrating crimes of which they are the first victims. People should not be led into utter despair. I intend this not merely as humanitarian advice, but also as a precondition for social and political coexistence in a world in which our fates are inevitably intertwined. Even for those of us who have lost the capacity to have compassion for others, and whose motivation is based on self-love and an urge to survive, it remains imperative not to push others into the dark realm of frustration. A frustrated person may choose death as the only remedy of his predicament: his own death and the death of others. At least part of our minds and hearts need to be set free from the clutches of instrumental and utilitarian reason and be opened up to moral rationality and altruistic reason. In this way it should become possible to have compassion for others. Let us have compassion not only for ourselves but also for others. Let us have compassion for others within their own idiosyncratic realms. Having compassion for others means not coercing them to assimilate to us or to succumb to our values. Compassion should come unconditionally. The only condition is a mutual agreement to refrain from atrocity and violence.

Let us welcome any plea to refrain from violence and to embrace compassion. Let us welcome any call that prefers the voice of humanity over the noise of explosions. Let us welcome any party that invites us not to racism but to respect for the human race. Let us respect the fundamental right of all parties to exist.

Moral rationality, heartfelt compassion for others and the ability to share in both the sufferings and the happiness of other people have so far managed to sustain our world. Let us breathe into the solemn and dry body of politics the soul of morality and ethics, thereby making it humane. When it comes to enmity and revenge, let us be as inclined to remember as a mirror. A tall, clean, truthful mirror can reflect to infinity our own beauties and those of others. It is unwise to shatter the mirror.

Mr. Schüssel (Austria): Please allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election and thank you for the leadership with which you are guiding this Assembly at a time of unprecedented challenges to the United Nations and its Member States. It is a particular honour for me to address the Assembly on a subject which, I believe, can significantly contribute to helping us find a convincing response to these terrible new challenges.

When the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed the dialogue among civilizations in 1998, many of us immediately realized the importance of his initiative. But little did we know how urgent and topical this initiative would become within a very short time. At the time, most of us probably felt that this would be a longer-term exercise to bridge a gap that was becoming obvious as international leaders and academics were struggling to come to terms with a new set of paradigms for international relations in the post-cold-war period. While some believed in a model of clashing civilizations dividing the world along fault lines of religion and culture, others shared the view that globalization would erode the remaining differences between societies and lead to one global civilization.

The tragic events of 11 September, which took place in this remarkable city — the main Headquarters of the United Nations and often referred to as the hub of the world — stress the need to think beyond the traditional patterns of diplomacy. Faced with an enemy completely disregarding human values and clearly misusing religion to justify the unjustifiable, we must

also think — and act — beyond our current efforts to bring the terrorists to justice. We need to accentuate more clearly our common values, the fundamental principles laid down in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We need to build upon these values a world of tolerance and mutual respect which, I hope, will eventually bring about peace and security and a genuine human rights culture in which the value and security of every human being are respected.

I remember well hearing the Secretary-General say, at a recent conference we organized in Salzburg, that for the first time in human history the values of human rights and democracy are globally accepted.

Today, I speak here as a European, as a Christian. I speak from my specific cultural background, as a concerned individual.

In these days, we are called upon to examine the value of the dialogue in our fight against terrorism: dialogue is the antithesis of hate and intolerance. It is my firm conviction that we can and shall use the Dialogue among Civilizations as a preventive tool against terrorism.

From the very outset, Austria warmly welcomed and supported the initiative to declare 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We hosted in Vienna the inaugural meeting of the Group of Eminent Persons established by the Secretary-General.

In August this year, we held the Salzburg Dialogue among Civilizations, and I had the pleasure to discuss with the Secretary-General and many other participants the role of the dialogue as a new paradigm of international relations.

Austria, a small country, has a long-standing tradition of promoting open and inclusive dialogue between religions. In the early 1990s, the Vienna Dialogue between Christianity and Islam was initiated, and many conferences were held. This initiative will continue next February with the Vienna Christian-Islamic Round Table.

Today, at the peak of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, it is my pleasure to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have so actively contributed to its success — in particular to the Secretary-General, but also to his Personal Representative, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, and to the Eminent Persons who authored the book *Crossing the Divide*, which we have just received.

Where do we go from here? The dialogue should be a dialogue between, as well as within, civilizations and societies. Its aim is better understanding, tolerance and respect for different opinions.

The principle of justice, for example, is a centrepiece of both the Bible and the Koran. Holy scriptures have played an essential role in the history of mankind for overcoming cases of injustice. In fact, one might argue that believing in God remains an empty phrase or even a blasphemy unless it includes the unshakeable insistence on justice, reconciliation and peace.

At a global level, justice must be a central aim both in the relationships among sovereign States and among individuals.

Can we close our eyes before the screaming injustice that in some parts of the world not even the most basic medical care is available, while in other parts fortunes are irresponsibly spent for marginal gains? Can we avoid the question of how to reach a fairer, more equal distribution of resources and chances in a globalized economy? Can we remain indifferent when confronted with the lack of hope and perspective on the part of the younger generation in many parts of the world, as a result of insufficient education and unemployment?

In order to reach all segments of society, we also have to make the dialogue more broad-based. In particular, we will have to aim for the children — our future. Boys and girls alike need a good education that teaches them the merits of mutual respect and solidarity. They should be able to grow up with a profound understanding of, and esteem for, diversity and plurality.

We also have to ensure greater involvement in the dialogue on the part of civil society and of the media. As a contribution, next year we will hold a seminar in Vienna on dialogue among civilizations and the role of the media.

Acts of violence, ethnic cleansing and terrorism are often rooted in the perception of diversity as a threat. That is why we must go beyond diplomatic circles and expert meetings and reach out to the hearts and minds of people, particularly young people, all

over the world. Let us use globalization to create a new awareness of togetherness and closeness among people.

Cultural diversity — far from being a threat — is enriching, both for individuals and for societies. Numerous examples throughout the centuries have proved that cultural exchange is beneficial for all involved. All of our civilizations are, in fact, the products of centuries of cultural interaction, and all civilizations continue to be influenced by each other. Civilizations are dynamic rather than static or monolithic entities.

Universality should not be mistaken for uniformity. Where uniformity denies diversity, universality is necessarily inclusive. This very forum — the United Nations — is built on universality and on diversity. Universality is no danger to cultural identity. On the contrary, the recognition of, and respect for, plurality is part of the universality that binds us together. It enables us to recognize differences and to consciously remove barriers. If focuses our minds on what is common to humanity — our shared values, which are embraced by different religions and societies.

Unity in diversity must be based on mutual respect, which transcends mere tolerance. As President Khatami so rightly stated in 1999 at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),

> "If this dialogue is to truly open a new chapter in global international relations, it has to advance from a phase of passive tolerance to a phase of mutual assistance."

Learning from others deepens our self-recognition. The famous Islamic teacher Iqbal knew — as did Goethe, the European poet and thinker — that dialogue does not mean assimilation but recognition and acceptance of differences, respect of diversity, and creativity in their selection.

In our societies, we are often victims of negative stereotypes. Too often, these stereotypes are misused to create so-called *feindbilder*, a German word that means "images of enemies", in order to stabilize societies or political power bases. What we need, on the contrary, are positive images of neighbourhood and partnership. In a globalized world, on this common planet, we need to reduce negative images and energy and put our creativity to work so that we can appreciate one another.

Let us dismantle our images of confrontation. Let us carry out the strenuous task of listening, getting in touch with each other and learning from one another. Let us first start with honest questions, not with instant answers. Let us delve into the depths rather than remain on the surface of zeitgeist debates.

The Austrian Cardinal Christoph Schönborn once said:

> "In an increasingly complex world, individual conscience is ever more important. We have to sharpen our conscience and learn to listen to its voice carefully. Doomed are the people and the country where the voice of conscience is crushed."

Learning from each other means abandoning the idea of a single truth. Truth can never be claimed as the property of any specific culture or civilization. We can only endeavour to search for truth together — patiently and persistently.

In order to become part of global solutions ourselves, let us start with small but concrete steps. Let us take a bottom-up rather than top-down approach.

Cultural dialogue is one instrument that could help achieve this, through the creation of intercultural networks for religious, economic and ecological exchanges. Let us better appreciate the value of minorities. Let us defend them and actively work against their alienation and isolation. Let us also try to win over international media in our effort towards solidarity and tolerance, and let us invite religious leaders to join in a dialogue, especially those who are still sceptical or reluctant. We need visible symbols and personalities in the quest for global solidarity and compassion.

The dialogue among civilizations will lack credibility and conviction unless women from all cultures and traditions fully participate in their societies and in the global community. Their experiences, aspirations and dreams must become part and parcel of our dialogue.

The pre-eminent place for dialogue remains, of course, our United Nations itself. But we know that dialogue is not possible between institutions; only human beings can enter into a dialogue with readiness

and openness, talking not so much about others but about themselves.

At the meeting on the dialogue among civilizations held last autumn here in New York, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said:

> "Without this dialogue taking place every day among all nations — within and between civilizations, cultures and groups — no peace can be lasting and no prosperity can be secure." *(SG/SM/7526)*

This has never been never more true. It also illustrates why the United Nations and the Secretary-General received this year's Nobel Peace Price, and I wholeheartedly extend my congratulations once again.

Much has been said about globalization and fragmentation in a world that is still unsettled after the end of the stable but stifling bipolar model of the second half of the last century. We have seen terrible conflicts based on ethnic and religious differences, and we have been helpless in the face of hate on the part of the other, which, because of its inherent irrationality, defies all rational efforts at conflict resolution.

To my mind, the heart of dialogue consists of tolerance and acceptance of our respective otherness — not back to back, but face to face.

However, dialogue, cooperation and understanding also entail joint intolerance of that which is intolerable. We may argue endlessly about what constitutes a civilization; however, there must not be any doubt that universal rules and principles apply everywhere. There can be no tolerance and no understanding for those who attack humanity, and there will be no place for them to hide.

The dialogue among civilizations is probably one of the most forward-looking initiatives of the final years of the violent twentieth century. It will be up to us to make wise use of its potential in order to make the twenty-first century an era of openness rather than withdrawal, of respect rather than rejection, and of togetherness rather than alienation.

Mr. Lagumdzija (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina, a European country that survived an experiment planned to be a clash of civilizations at the end of the twentieth century — it is a special pleasure for me to join you today at the United Nations to contribute to a global agenda for dialogue among civilizations.

Less than 10 years ago, terrorists tried to exploit religion and ethnic identity in order to widen the gap, or build a wall, between "us" and "them", between people whom they considered to be guilty because they were somehow different. For years the international community remained neutral, staying between the local armed forces and trying to protect civilians as much as they were allowed to, but without interfering in the war.

At that time, Slobodan Milosevic was bombing Dubrovnik, a medieval jewel on the Adriatic coast, killing mostly Catholics. Meanwhile, his key henchmen, Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic, who are under indictment today for war crimes, were keeping Sarajevo besieged and explaining that, by doing so, they were protecting Christianity from Islam in the heart of Europe. No one called them Orthodox terrorists. They were simply among the terrorists who later ended up as war criminals. But when the world united to stop the war, the war ended.

Today, another group of people acting on behalf of Islam in another part of the world are exploiting religion in order to impose their values by terror and crime. Every Bosnian, Muslim and non-Muslim, sharing each other's heritage, knows very well the saying from the Holy Qur'an (*S.5, A.32*)

> "That if anyone slew
> A person ...
> It would be as if
> He slew the whole people."

Solidarity and justice are two very fundamental values that we all believe in, and under which we want to live.

We have to use the tragedy of 11 September 2001 — which was not only a tragedy for America, but also a tragedy for all humankind — as an opportunity to wake up and strike at the very roots of global terrorism — to strike at selfishness and isolationism and at injustice and poverty with new, wider initiatives and agendas. The time has come to have statehood for Palestinians and security for Israelis. Dialogue among civilizations on the local and global levels is the only way to exterminate terrorism.

Coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Balkan country that has experienced a different kind of fundamentalism and faces the problems because of its

multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious nature, I am especially sensitive to terrorism that exploits religious feelings and, by so doing, puts local and global society in jeopardy. For 10 years during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and during the initial years of peace-building and reconstruction of the country, we witnessed how terrorism, religious fundamentalism, nationalism and segregation led to nothing but war criminals, organized crime, poverty and injustice. The fight that we are leading today is a fight against the consequences of poverty, ignorance and injustice.

There is a much bigger task expected of us: to uproot the causes and eliminate the potential focal points of new extremism. Thus we have to support actions targeted against terrorists, but at the same time be more vocal and more action-oriented when we call for quick and massive help for the people of Afghanistan and other related areas with all sorts of humanitarian needs. The war against terrorists is justified, but all of us will be losers if we fail to do everything we can to help innocent people who are suffering today.

I am saying this because I know from my own experience what all this means. After surviving four years of war and 12 difficult surgeries because of being severely wounded — though a civilian — in my home city of Sarajevo, I do not hate anyone. I am only grateful to the people who gave me an opportunity to survive. After personally visiting four capitals in the last three weeks and talking to key European leaders, I am taking the floor here today not to say or ask but — if I may speak metaphorically — to scream to and to beg the Assembly to speed up all kinds of humanitarian help to innocent people who are the victims of their own leadership.

One more dollar, yen or euro that is spent one hour sooner can save some little child who may one day come to this building as a new leader of Afghanistan to speak on behalf of his proud country — someone like the great scientist and reformer Jamal Al-Deen Al-Afghani, who, I am sure, would today promote priorities such as education, freedom, information technologies and the rule of law instead of all the kinds of prohibitions imposed by the Taliban. But it has to be clearly seen that, whatever happens, this is not a war of civilizations. It is a war between civilization and open society, on the one side, and terrorism and tribalism, on the other.

The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina — Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs, Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox — are all united, having chosen together to be on the side of civilization and an open society. We chose to be on the side of dialogue, not on the side of division among civilizations. Our only goal is a multi-religious multi-ethnic, open society, a Bosnia Herzegovina that is an economically sustainable, democratic State, a natural and integral part of a democratic and socially just Europe and world.

This war, a war for civilization and an open society and for the right to be different and to be protected by the rule of law, cannot be won without a new generation of creative and credible leaders, who prove their courage by words and deeds in my country, in Europe and in the world. Let me outline some of the lessons we have learned in the hardest way — from our own experience.

First, when you are confronted with the dilemma of dialogue or division, recognize the dilemma: are you going to build peace or start a war?

Secondly, "our" enemy is not "they" — nations, religions, cultures or races. All of us have a common enemy: poverty and injustice.

Thirdly, if you want to defend yourself and be left in peace, it's not a question of being able to defend yourself, but of being able to defend people around you from yourself.

Fourthly, a civilization confronted with terrorism has no choice. Terrorism and crime have no religion, ethnicity or civilization. Terrorism is the one that chooses war, and civilization has to go into it in order to survive. But civilization has a choice: to save its own soul by helping civilians, using as many resources as it can to strike at terrorism with legitimate force and military action.

Fifthly, you can defeat terrorists and war criminals only with force. People like Karadzic or bin Laden have to be brought to justice. But you cannot build with force. The peace-building process can be made successful only by investing massively in education, building up the institutions of the State, strengthening the economy and ruling by the rule of law, not by the rule of the rulers.

Sixthly, leaders demonstrate courage when they sign peace agreements. People can make peace only if their leaders show creativity while leading credibly by

their own example and communicating their vision to their network of followers who, under that skilful leadership, manage changes in their respective areas of expertise.

Seventhly, dialogue cannot be only in words; it must be in deeds as well, through the five dimensions of the new era: education, ecumenism, environmental responsibility, economy and electronic media.

Finally, allow me to share one powerful learning experience with you, which is a clear example of people's needs, tragedies and dreams today. Almost 10 years ago, when the siege of the city of Sarajevo started, we were all shocked by a live television story about a man in a hospital holding his five-year-old daughter, who had been hit in the head by a sniper while playing in the backyard with her friends. Her only crime was that she was one of "them", that she belonged to — as the killer would probably say — the wrong ethnicity or religion.

The father was holding his daughter in his arms when a journalist asked him: "What would you do to the man who shot your daughter?" Hugging the child, he responded,

> "Nothing, I would like to have coffee with him and to tell him: 'Congratulations, now you made it. You hit a child, hero.' I only hope that her tears will follow him all his life."

Some time ago I saw that same man being asked by the same journalist: "Now that the war is over, would you want real punishment for the sniper shooter? Have you changed your mind?" The answer was clear: "I do not". He continued:

> "Thanks to Almighty God, my daughter recovered by a miracle. A son was born in the meantime, who was also wounded by shrapnel, but he is in good health now as well. My house was destroyed. I have no job, but today the only thing I want is to work, to rebuild my house, to provide my kids with a chance to become educated, to be healthy, to grow up and to love good people. I do not want anyone to experience what I did. Nothing is worth a child's tears."

I am absolutely sure that there can be no reason for even one child's tears. This is why we need a new generation of leaders, to be different from and better than today's leaders. The new generations have to live and grow in a different environment. Our duty is to give them a fair opportunity to create a set of values that will help us envision a world in which there will be fewer children's tears than there are today.

I am sure that the great number of States and organizations represented here today came to show their commitment to a dialogue of words and deeds that can realize our vision of civilizations living in harmony, instead of the nightmare of the clash among civilizations.

I am offering you my country as a place, as a case, as a forum in which dialogue won over division. I am calling on members to come look at us and see, on a small scale, what the future of civilizations looks like. So far, Bosnia and Herzegovina has proved to be the place that rendered the notion of a clash of civilizations null and void and now is on its way to becoming proof that democracy, freedom and respect of human rights are universal.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern Europe countries associated with the European Union — the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey align themselves with this statement.

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election and on the skill with which you have led this session in particularly difficult circumstances.

When we decided to declare 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations we could not have foreseen that this year would remain in peoples' memories primarily as that of the war against terrorism, a kind of terrorism suddenly emerging as one of the major challenges in a globalized world. Those who organized the monstrous attacks of 11 September made a deliberate attempt to spread hatred among peoples and provoke a clash between religions and cultures.

Their hope is undoubtedly to provoke that much-publicized clash between civilizations that was predicted at the end of the cold war. Our debate today should provide further proof that their actions had the opposite effect of what they had hoped for. The overwhelming majority of States represented here have condemned them unreservedly. We have closed ranks; we have expressed our solidarity with the United

States. We have recognized that a legitimate response was necessary, and we have cooperated in setting up an arsenal of measures at the global level to combat terrorism.

We must also — and today's debate provides the ideal opportunity to do this — try to build some foundations for what will doubtless be one of the main projects of the century that has begun: the dialogue among civilizations, which includes and respects the plurality and the diversity of cultures, to bring them together and strengthen them and to expand and strengthen the common bases of universal values. During the Millennium Summit, the heads of State and Government identified freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and the sharing of responsibilities as fundamental values. Therefore, I would like to thank President Khatami, who was behind this initiative, and the Secretary-General for his personal attention to this project.

The tragedy of 11 September, as we all witnessed so vividly, produced a shock wave throughout the world, the breadth of which led us naturally to look into its root causes. As their perpetrators have referred to Islam to justify their acts, some people have seen in these events the beginning of an era ripped apart by violent, passionate and radical confrontation between civilizations.

We wish to condemn outright this talk of division and fear. For us, the terrorist attacks of 11 September are purely negative and hateful acts directed against all of us, with no real distinction between civilizations, cultures and religions. Terrorism is the act of those minorities who wish to impose their plan through terror. It is a phenomenon that is by definition antidemocratic.

But it is not enough to reject this talk and these acts. We must oppose them with action based on a dynamic approach of the modern world and a firmly positive conviction of the universal rules of the society that we wish to establish: rules that assure and guarantee respect for differences, tolerance, dialogue and respect for others. This fight for the human person compels us to promote our common and shared values as a whole. That responds to the spirit of the Secretary-General's speech on the dialogue among civilizations at Salzburg on 28 August 2001.

In that context, it seems to me that we must avoid two dangers. This must be stressed so that there is never confusion between the fight against terrorism and the disloyal fight against some disturbed elements of the opposition. That danger really exists. It is also necessary to take measures so that the fight against terrorism does not affect the level of demand and the democratic nature of our societies.

We must emphasize here that our shared, common values have developed over the course of history. Humanity has developed its ethical traditions in the conviction that human beings are endowed with reason and a moral conscience and that they should treat each other in a fraternal spirit. It is this search for common moral and ethical values that has led to the codification of universal legal standards, which set out today the universal rights designed to protect the dignity of every human being. The United Nations Charter contains a set of values and principles that unite the international community.

This debate, devoted to the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, gives each of us the opportunity to ask ourselves questions. Have we remained faithful to our own cultures and to their underlying values? Has our Western culture been aggressive or at times too dominant because the great majority of mankind sees it close up but does not have access to it? Have not the great cultural debates sometimes appeared as discussions of rich, ethnocentric people who did not understand or who ignored the political, economic, social, cultural and spiritual realities of anything outside the Western world?

The only real answer is clearly dialogue, and today it is a dialogue of cultures, a dialogue among civilizations, which cannot be reduced to a dialogue among religions. What are the principles underlying a true dialogue of cultures? First of all, it is the equal dignity of all cultures and their ability to interpenetrate and enrich each other in a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect. The other founding principle, it seems to me, is the need for cultural diversity — the right to difference and identity. This principle is inseparable from the principle that all cultures have equal dignity.

It is from this perspective that the European Union sees dialogue among civilizations. But there should be no taboos. We are duty-bound to ask questions of our own civilization, and we also have the right to ask questions of others. But others also have the right to question us on our civilization and as to

why, for example, certain inequalities exist. If the dialogue among civilizations were reduced to meeting to congratulate one another, this would obviously not be a dialogue.

We need to ask ourselves about the link between culture and politics. Pretentious exaltation and intense cultural preferences can lead to nationalisms of exclusion and rejection. It would be good to recall that while we favour equality of cultures, the culture in question should not be based on identifying signs or characteristics totally incompatible with human dignity or the principles and values that make up our common commitment to humanism, the rule of law and respect for the dignity of others. Having said this, we need to stress the importance, for example, of questioning the links between religion and politics.

The community of nations needs a frank, revitalised, renewed and reinvented dialogue in touch with what is going on in the world. It needs a real dialogue among civilizations that strengthens traditional diplomacy in its role of pursuing ideas and consensuses and thus helps the United Nations in its task of bringing peoples together and fighting all forms of exclusion. This is the only way that we will create a common basis of shared fundamental values for all civilizations.

This dialogue of peoples and cultures means both respect for others and self-respect. Respecting others is first of all wanting to get to know them. This requires an open mind, trust, imagination, a rejection of complacency, moral strength and firmness to resist anything that could imperil freedom and individual rights. No value is the exclusive prerogative of one group, people or culture.

Wanting to know others is also and above all an attempt to know oneself. The dialogue of cultures must be carried on with lucidity and also humility. All of us must examine our own cultures in a spirit of openness and make sure that the dialogue is fruitful. Self-respect is another key element. We must be sure of our own values and ideals in order to start a rich and constructive dialogue. We should also, I think, base such an approach on the conviction that one culture — even if it is founded on intangible ideas — is never a process that is fully completed; on the contrary, it can survive only if it is dynamic and continues to evolve.

In the United Nations system, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is called upon to play a special role in developing the dialogue among cultures. As UNESCO has reminded us, one of the major aims of the dialogue among civilizations is to increase and spread knowledge and appreciation of the historic and cultural bases of societies all over the world. The European Union welcomes the adoption a few days ago, at the thirty-first General Conference of UNESCO, of a declaration on cultural diversity, which opens the way to promotion of these principles.

The aim of the dialogue among civilizations should be to include and integrate. As the World Programme for Dialogue among Civilizations proposes, a major objective will be to promote the inclusion of all people, fairness, equality, justice and tolerance in human interactions. Cultures are different and these differences can never make them superior or inferior to one another. Cultural pluralism and diversity are a source of wealth and a priceless heritage for humankind. The best way to promote mutual understanding and to combat the scourge of intolerance is dialogue.

Cultural diversity is at the very heart of the founding vision of the European Union. The Treaty of Rome establishing the European Community stipulates that:

> "The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore."

Improving knowledge and the disseminating the culture of European peoples was emphasized from the very beginning of European unification.

In its relations with third parties, the European Union is also committed to the promotion of universal values such as human rights or principles underlying democratic rule of law. The European Union attaches great importance to the promotion, by its member States and by civil society and the individuals that make it up, of respect for the intrinsic dignity of human beings and for their rights. We are convinced that promoting these values goes hand in hand with the dialogue among cultures and can only enrich and strengthen it. In this connection, the European Union wishes to affirm the existence of a universal ethic, especially the one that inspired the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This ethic belongs to all

peoples, all nations and all religions. To affirm this universality is to underline the solidarity that links all human beings.

A true dialogue among civilizations will help to reinforce this universal awareness, while rejecting a cultural relativism that would be tantamount to denying both diversity and shared values.

The European Union has followed with great interest the work done by the group of eminent persons designated by the Secretary-General to lead the talks on the prospects of a dialogue among civilizations. Led by his Personal Representative, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, they have marked out the essential milestones for what will be a very long-term project, designed to construct a new paradigm for relations between nations and cultures. We congratulate the group on the remarkable contribution it has made, and we are confident that it will encourage discussion and reflection — in other words, dialogue.

The European Union would like to thank its partners for the constructive spirit that has prevailed during the preparation of the resolution on the draft Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. We hope that the implementation of this programme will receive the attention that it deserves well beyond this year and that this dialogue will be promoted at all levels: local, national, regional and international. The Union would like to point out here that it has been conducting an extremely diversified dialogue for a long time now with a great many countries and regional groups.

The dialogue among civilizations is an innovative facet of the permanent dialogue that has been conducted within the United Nations since it founded. The European Union hopes that this tool will reinforce the work for peace and bringing peoples together that the United Nations has accomplished, work that has recently earned it the Nobel Peace Prize. By participating actively, the Union hopes to contribute towards the emergence of a more harmonious, tolerant and just world.

Ms. Ratsifandriamanana (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): We are gathered again in the General Assembly Hall, in the very heart of New York, which is still traumatized, as we all are, by the memory of the massacre of 11 September. New York is a crossroads of cultural diversity, a cosmopolitan city where the most varied civilizations coexist.

On behalf of the Madagascar delegation, I wish to reiterate our words of salutation and homage to you, Mr. Han Seung-soo, President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, which is full of so many challenges and expectations; and to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, who during his term of office led the Millennium Assembly. We are proud that our Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize he so deserved. That honour expressed the confidence of the whole world in our Organization.

We have nearly reached the end of the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and we would now like to take stock of the Year and to outline the way forward. We are grateful to President Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran for having taken the initiative. We are also grateful to the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, for his commendable contribution. Several States and international organizations, in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and several non-governmental organizations and academic institutions have come together to make a reality of the noble resolution 53/22, adopted on 4 November 1998.

Madagascar subscribes to the Millennium Declaration's provisions regarding the aspirations of the peoples of the world to work for peace and on dialogue among civilizations. Madagascar supported and co-sponsored resolution 55/254, on the protection of religious sites. My country welcomes the launching of the book entitled *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*.

Furthermore, we very much appreciate the establishment of the United Nations trust fund for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We strongly support the recommendations of the Salzburg meeting, held in August 2001, on dialogue among civilizations as a new paradigm of international relations. Likewise, we enthusiastically welcome the International UNESCO Conference on cultural policy as a global task.

Madagascar is one of the African countries that celebrated the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. A discussion workshop was organized from 10 to 12 October, with the participation of leaders of State and academic institutions and civil society, national and international experts, and political and religious

leaders. The main themes discussed were the promotion of diversity, tolerance, interdependence, rethinking the concepts of enemy and defence at the dawn of the third millennium, identifying the responsibility of international political actors and thinking about dialogue and poverty eradication. It is a pleasure for me to share with the Assembly the main points that emerged from that gathering.

The first point is the use of dialogue in order to rethink the concept of enemy. Enemy today has a global, international and collective character. A global enemy can be, for example, poverty, AIDS, terrorism or global warming. An international enemy attacks all countries, rich and poor, without discrimination. It can be a collective enemy, because no country can remain indifferent to it, and our struggle against it becomes a joint struggle. Our response also has to be global, international and collective, based on an awareness of the interdependence of nations, the need for international solidarity and the urgent need for an ongoing multidirectional dialogue. Clearly, a new defence strategy resulting from global dialogue must be worked out under the aegis of the United Nations.

In order to make the enemy an adversary, let us first create circumstances conducive to an exchange of ideas and to mutual understanding. Then, to make the adversary a partner, let us establish a climate of cooperation in order to provide a common framework for action. Finally, in order to make the partner a friend, let us have interactive communication in a climate of real trust.

The second point is to engage in dialogue in order to promote the well-being of peoples. Dialogue will become an instrument for positive, peaceful and pragmatic action for sustainable human development, a support system for strategies to combat poverty and scourges of all kinds. Dialogue remains an agent of reconciliation, opening up, harmony and appreciation of diversity. Dialogue is a catalyst for cultural integration at various levels. Traditional values could be reference points for creating a system of behaviour leading to peace, for strengthening the links among countries and for encouraging respect for human rights.

The third point is to use dialogue as a means of active expression. The President of the Republic of Madagascar, Mr. Didier Ratsiraka, has proposed a non-aggression pact at the national level among the religious institutions of our country in order to pre-empt the risk of a clash of religions or schools of thought. We must have the courage to denounce the excesses of ideological fanaticism and extremism, which do damage to our shared principles. Any dialogue requires preparation. We must start learning to dialogue, because there are several ways to dialogue, depending on the situations, sensitivities and needs involved.

A universal manual of procedures for conducting dialogue should be worked out to serve as a common reference tool or guidepost to avoid awkward communication. The risk of radical reactions could thus be avoided.

With regard to the access of developing countries to new information and communication technologies and to different linguistic systems, greater support is required on the part of the developed countries in order to narrow the gap and to overcome the communication divide among nations. Mobility programmes for people from one country to another should be extended within the United Nations, like those that have already been initiated by various regional groups and countries.

There can be no successful dialogue so long as the culture of peace and openness, which is so often mentioned, remains divorced from daily realities; so long as frustrations of all sorts, intolerance and destitution persist; and so long as the excellent resolutions adopted in this Hall are not accompanied by concrete action. On the basis of this conviction, we approve the United Nations programme for the dialogue among civilizations.

Mr. Ismail (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to extend to you, Sir, my congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. We also thank your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for his efforts in making the fifty-fifth session a success. We extend our appreciation to the staff of your office. We are fully confident that, with your wisdom and expertise, you will lead us to the results to which we all aspire.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the report of the Secretary-General in document A/56/523, under agenda item 25, "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations". We commend the efforts of Mr. Giandomenico Picco, the personal representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We also commend the important role played by the United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and by other academic and scientific institutions, and we look forward to working further in this area and to intensifying our efforts to encourage exchanges of views and interaction between all sectors and individuals, Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, researchers, thinkers and artists from all cultures and civilizations.

In this regard, we salute the publication of the book entitled *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*, to which the personal representative of the Secretary-General, in cooperation with UNESCO, and other eminent persons and thinkers from various cultural backgrounds have contributed. We believe that this represents a real beginning in the setting of joint solid foundations for an exchange of views and expertise to reach a better understanding that will give us an objective and meaningful dialogue among civilizations. We also commend the Islamic Republic of Iran for preparing the draft global agenda for dialogue among civilizations.

Islam is based on the unity of humankind arising from the roots of belief and from the faith that we all share the same origin and that the family of Abraham includes all humankind; that common human nature undoubtedly unifies all cultures and civilizations; and that cultural heritages belong to all humankind. On the basis of these concepts, human relations are formulated through interaction and positive cooperation to populate and develop our planet and to enjoy its fruits in solidarity and harmony. This demonstrates that all people are equal, free and partners. It also leads to peaceful coexistence and the meeting of civilizations in which pluralism is a source of power. Dialogue is thus all the more important in promoting human behaviour that rejects the standards of materialism and their influence. It also contributes to the creation of common working methods; the preservation of traditions and respect for the choices of others, thus promoting the spirit of peaceful coexistence among cultures, deepening interaction between them and weakening the desire for hegemony and cultural exclusion.

The dialogue among religions, a very important matter in Sudan's policies in international affairs, has reached a very advanced stage, as attested to by the international conference on dialogue among religions organized by Sudan in November 2000, which, because of its fruitful results, may serve as a model for religious leaders, particularly those from the West. The conference exemplifies efforts made by Sudan that could be generally extended to areas of dialogue on the basis of specific principles in the search, first, for a joint language for dialogue and then for mutual recognition of the specificities of each culture, rejecting the legacies of past conflicts, addressing primary issues and shunning marginal ones and developing a clear vision for the future.

Sudan submitted a draft resolution to the Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Havana in April 2001, calling for the establishment of an international forum for dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions in order to promote peace, security and stability, lessen the intensity of conflicts and wars throughout the world, achieve consensus on a minimal level of mutual respect and exploit this positive atmosphere in service of the international community. The Conference accepted this initiative and decided to engage a dialogue among cultures in addressing international issues. This is a propitious forum for orchestrating a coordinated effort to promote the values of dialogue.

In calling for a tolerant and humane world in which the culture of peace prevails, we urge peoples of diverse cultures to reject the propagation of erroneous concepts that could have very grave consequences, as some have predicted, with respect to a possible clash of civilizations in which certain cultures consider themselves superior to others in terms of race, religion and thought. Such a catastrophe would be further aggravated if the leaders and eminent persons of those societies were to embrace such claims, the results of which would be disastrous to the stability of humankind.

Agreement that there are specific issues that highlight the presence of dispute and divergence of view is the first requirement for the success of any process of dialogue. It is clear that the current clash of cultures in the international community has come about because certain problems were exacerbated to such an extent that military confrontation resulted. At other times, such problems might subside and the results would be mere statements of concern.

Our main areas of disagreement relate to important issues, the most prominent of which concern human rights, democracy, religion, values, the global economy and the culture of gender. These issues need

to be addressed with a great deal of transparency; acculturation is much more important than self-centred interest in one's own culture. This leads us to a number of conclusions, which we must accept if we are to engage in fruitful and results-oriented dialogue.

The erroneous concepts of human rights held by some but not by others, and the problems that these concepts entail in the international community — this means that we must undertake a dialogue to understand the particulars of each culture so as to ensure that there is no unilateral concept of human rights. There is divergence among cultures concerning the concept of democracy. Different cultures agree that the freedom of the individual is the basis of political practice; the disagreement relates to the degree of this freedom. This disagreement requires us to start a real and constructive dialogue to understand the basis and the dimensions of each culture so as to prevent conflict and misunderstanding. Safeguarding fundamental human rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of worship, freedom of belief and freedom of association, must be promoted and placed in the appropriate context in conformity with international covenants. We would like to refer here to the Millennium Declaration, which affirms the importance of fundamental principles on which international relations should be based.

We should all note the importance of spirituality in establishing noble values and in affirming that freedom of belief and of worship should not be a matter of dispute or of conflict among civilizations. In this context we value the daring initiative taken by Prince Charles to cross the divide between Islamic and Western cultures on the basis of his understanding of the importance of dialogue in dispelling tendencies towards intolerance.

The economic concept of globalization has become a reality from which there is no escape. The developed countries have coped with the requirements of globalization, but the developing and the least developed countries have not done so. An economic dialogue of civilizations should therefore begin by exploring the unjust disparities between rich and poor throughout the world, inasmuch as 20 per cent of the population of the world owns 80 per cent of its wealth.

Dialogue should explore areas for possible cooperation in order to reduce the distance between the two worlds. It is clear that the rich world has not fulfilled its responsibilities, given the poverty, disease and ignorance from which the poor world is still suffering. The impact of poverty cuts across the boundaries of the rich nations; the whole world has become subject to the two forces of influencing and being influenced; it is a world that is becoming smaller and smaller every day.

In this context, the debt burden is a terrible nightmare. In addition to reflecting the injustices of the rich and the complaints of the poor, it embodies a structural imbalance in the global economic system. In the dialogue on the debt burden, therefore, we should go beyond debt cancellation and rescheduling and take a daring step forward on the basis of a just partnership for development, preserving the rights of creditors while allowing the debtor countries not merely to pay off their debts but also to make active investments.

The tragic events of 11 September and the current international situation makes the idea of dialogue among cultures and civilizations a priority. Were it not for the determination of some rational people not to link Islam to these events, the biased mass media coverage would have led to a catastrophe that would have had negative repercussions on the idea of dialogue among civilizations. These tragic events serve as a starting-point for an open, fruitful and constructive dialogue among civilizations. These tragic events serve as a starting point for a fruitful dialogue between civilizations for the benefit of the whole of humanity.

A religion such as Islam that calls upon the faithful to believe in all heavenly messengers and holy scriptures cannot be called intolerant. A religion that calls upon believers to salute peacefully people whom they know or do not know, and to provide refuge to anybody who asks, whatever the hostility and differences between them, cannot be described as a religion of terrorism. A religion that sends people to hell because they have not fed a pet, and to heaven for giving a drink to a thirsty dog, cannot be considered a religion that violates human rights. A religion that calls upon believers to show the right path of God with wisdom and good advice cannot be called intolerant or seen as rejecting dialogue.

Despite the tragic events and the conflicts that the world has witnessed since the beginning of history, we, as human beings at the beginning of the twenty-first century, must call for tolerance, non-violence and coexistence in peace and security. The world today has benefited from amazing developments in the economic

and industrial spheres; it has become a small global village as a result of the advance of science and technology. We should mobilize all these benefits so as to ensure constructive interaction between different cultures, with all their different religions and beliefs — whatever their manifestations — thereby embodying the lofty purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for justice, social development and tolerance and for peace and good neighbourly-relations.

In conclusion, my delegation has sponsored the draft resolution "Global agenda for dialogue among civilizations" — a basic building block for very important work for the benefit of humanity. This will require all delegations to make an effort to ensure a firm basis for a new world of harmony, peace, justice, tolerance, brotherliness and equality.

Mr. Rojas López (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by congratulating Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his Personal Representative for the United Nations International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, on their excellent work to organize this dialogue. I also wish to thank the Islamic Republic of Iran for its tireless commitment to, and interest in, this subject. Likewise, I would like to express my gratitude to the Group of Eminent Persons for its valuable work to establish the conceptual basis of this meeting.

The General Assembly's initiative to proclaim this year the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations is unquestionably one of the most important acts undertaken by the Organization to achieve peace in the world. Dialogue is undoubtedly the best way for us to understand one another. In a world with a variety of cultures and beliefs, it is dialogue that makes it possible to build bridges of understanding and to achieve harmony on the basis of our common humanity. We must avoid ignorance, which many times is the origin of fear and conflict.

Clearly, this dialogue is taking place in a new and unforeseen global context. The whole of humankind witnessed with disbelief and horror the terrorist attack carried out in the city of New York on 11 September 2001. The consequences of that attack have had an impact on major current developments. The world has not been the same since then, and will never be the same again.

The current war on terrorism should not mean a confrontation among civilizations; nor should it mean a confrontation between religions, since, at their core, all religions share a similar message of respect and tolerance towards others. It should definitely not be interpreted as a conflict of values. The struggle against terrorism and the dialogue among civilizations presuppose the essential need for all human beings to be able to enjoy the same potential for human development. Diversity in belief, culture, language, religion, history and even economic systems should not drive humankind towards intolerance. On the contrary, those apparent differences can become a valuable source of enrichment, complementarity and solidarity.

We should ask ourselves what prompts people to turn the terror and suffering of others into a way of life. How can we explain the fact that human beings should acquire such great contempt for their fellows that they have no qualms about killing thousands of people, or sometimes even revel in it?

One of the elements of the comprehensive fight against terrorism is combating poverty. Given that poverty provides a breeding ground for ignorance, resentment and fanaticism, it is clear that this factor must be taken into account. In this regard, international solidarity between rich and poor countries is of key importance. Industrialized countries should make a greater effort to fulfil the commitment to devote a minimum of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to international cooperation. Likewise, that solidarity should also be reflected in international trade so that the products of developing countries can be purchased at fair prices that are not undermined by unfair trading practices, which in the end always affect the poorest.

However, it is also clear that terrorism does not boil down to a problem of poverty or economic exclusion alone. It is well known that many of the individuals who have joined terrorist groups, including some European groups, and their top leaders were raised in well-to-do families and have had access to excellent educations. Indeed, many of them have for years lived in the United States or in Europe, and have therefore been exposed to the Western way of life and culture. Even so, they have clung to their ideology of terror. Neither poverty nor ignorance can explain that.

For those reasons it would appear that we need to look for the causes of terrorism at a deeper level in the human psyche. I am no specialist in this respect, but I

have the impression that one key element is to be found in intolerance and an inability to understand others — in other words, in profound self-centredness.

The call for the dialogue among civilizations to focus on changing the mentality that perceives diversity as a threat is particularly important, as is the development of a new paradigm of international relations based on such a change in mentality. I would also add the importance of overcoming the mentality that considers one's own ideological, philosophical and religious beliefs as the only valid ones. This is the essence of tolerance, a vital prerequisite for being able to carry out a dialogue among civilizations.

From among the various points that Mr. Picco makes, I would like to refer to two in particular: reassessing our concept of the enemy and the development of individual responsibility in international relations. Clearly, one consequence of the attacks of 11 September is a new pattern of international politics. A bridge has been built between former rivals, and a global threat has been identified, calling for the concerted efforts of all States and individuals. Unfortunately for the terrorists, rather than sparking conflict among civilizations, the attacks of 11 September have reinforced the unity of the global civilization in opposing and combating this scourge.

This newly emerged phase of global civilization has a number of distinctive features. Notwithstanding our cultural, political, ethnic or racial differences, we all share respect for human life, a love of freedom and a commitment to pass on to our children a better world. This set of beliefs is without question the doctrine of human rights. Respect for human rights is, in the final analysis, the first global ethic that humankind has developed. This is precisely the global ethic to which the Group of Eminent Persons refers at the end of the executive summary of its publication, and it should serve as the basis for the dialogue among civilizations. Accordingly, one fundamental task that humankind must face is to continue to bolster the doctrine of human rights and, above all, to strengthen effective ways and means of promoting and protecting them.

The call to strengthen multilateral responsibility in international relations is a key point. Tolerance must prevail over lack of understanding among cultures. Our deepest sense of love for humanity must prevail over gestures of contempt for life. These are the values that should characterize the global civilization of the twenty-first century.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

United Nations A/56/PV.43

General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

43rd plenary meeting
Friday, 9 November 2001, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: reports of the General Committee

Third report of the General Committee (A/56/250/Add.2)

The President: I should like to draw the attention of the representatives to the third report of the General Committee (A/56/250/Add.2).

In paragraph 1 of this report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that agenda item 169, "Administration of justice at the United Nations", be allocated to the Fifth Committee, on the understanding that any decision requiring amending the statute of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal or relating to the establishment of a higher-level jurisdiction would be subject to the advice of the Sixth Committee.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate agenda item 169, "Administration of justice at the United Nations", to the Fifth Committee, on the understanding that any decision requiring amending the statute of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal or relating to the establishment of a higher-level jurisdiction would be subject to the advice of the Sixth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 2 of its report, the General Committee decided, with regard to agenda item 12, "Report of the Economic and Social Council", to recommend to the General Assembly that the report of the Economic and Social Council, as a whole, be considered directly in plenary meeting, on the understanding that the Second, Third and Fifth Committees would remain seized of the chapters already referred to them for their usual consideration.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides, with regard to agenda item 12, "Report of the Economic and Social Council", to consider directly in plenary meeting the report of the Economic and Social Council as a whole, on the understanding that the Second, Third and Fifth Committees remain seized of the chapters already referred to them for their usual consideration?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 25 (*continued*)

United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/523)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.3)

Mr. Negroponte (United States of America): The indiscriminate brutality of the 11 September terrorist attacks represented the antithesis of all that we would hope to achieve in a dialogue of civilizations, if by "civilization" we mean a mode of communal existence

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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that expresses a people's finest qualities and greatest gifts and blessings.

Attempting to don Islam's mantle, the terrorists argued that they pursued a holy war whose premise was the non-existence of another people. But these men did not — they could not — represent Islam. Instead, criminal actions such as theirs reflected utter alienation and hatred — a judgement that innocent people had no right to live, a unilateral decision to incinerate thousands of citizens of many lands and many faiths. Men and women died. Jews, Christians and Moslems died. Arabs, Asians, Africans, Europeans and Latin Americans died.

This was neither "dialogue" nor was it "civilization", but it unquestionably adds urgency to our mission here today. While we may be sure that the perpetrators of 11 September will receive justice, questions remain: How can we harmonize differing perceptions of the world's glorious diversity, how can we ensure that the savage impulse to negate the very existence of another people is consigned to humanity's past? To look at these questions within the framework of dialogue and civilization captures much that is essential to our task, and we are appreciative that the Secretary-General has raised our efforts to such a high level.

To begin, the greater danger confronting us in the world today is not that we speak in different languages, but that we don't always listen in *any* language. The art of hearing one another, the commitment to respond to what one is told: these are the fundamental dynamics of dialogue. And dialogue — two-way communication — is of supreme importance in attempting to address the vast complexity of civilizations that have evolved over the course of centuries and, indeed, millennia. For civilization is not static. Civilization is alive; it is the basis upon which dialogue with others is possible. Our civilizations are our voice and meaning; they are capacity for harmonious exchange; they are our capacity for mutual understanding.

The United States, of course, is a manifestation of Western civilization, with deep cultural roots in the ancient world of the Mediterranean, but it is much more than that. During the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, immigrants arrived not only from the parts of Western Europe traditionally associated with the American population, but also from regions in Eastern and Southern Europe and Asia. By the early twentieth century, these patterns had yielded to larger numbers of immigrants coming from Latin America, Asia and Africa.

And many of those who ultimately constituted the United States were not, of course, immigrants at all. They were slaves, or they were indigenous peoples whose arrival in North America predated European settlement by many centuries. These are the darkest facts in our history. Change came slowly. Six hundred thousand died in our Civil War as we put an end to slavery; the struggle for racial equality and civil rights extended through the twentieth century.

More remains to be done, but the difficulties of diversity have given definition to our best efforts and most inspiring accomplishments. *E pluribus unum* is a motto that captures the American experience well.

Here in New York we have seen the rise of Little Italy, Chinatown and the phenomenon sometimes referred to as "Moscow on the Hudson". On our West Coast, California public schools offer instruction in over 80 different languages, while Los Angeles possesses one of the largest Spanish-speaking populations of any city anywhere. In a world that is globalized, we ourselves are globalized. There is a portion of agony and vertigo in this, but a greater portion of treasure. The dialogue among civilizations as we practice it in the United States is an effort to reconcile what we believe and do together and what we believe and do alone. We are all Americans, but we are also Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Moslems and Hindus. There are 1,200 mosques in the United States. There are Buddhist temples. There are large communities of Sikhs and Eastern Orthodox Christians. This, today, in the year 2001, is America, and we are grateful for the constant challenge to be tolerant, the constant challenge to demonstrate mutual respect, the constant challenge to learn something new from human traditions and beliefs and ethnicities that are very old.

Today, in the shadow of 11 September, the same challenge confronts the world at large. Religion-based and communitarian conflict clouds the dawn of the twenty-first century. Some misguided individuals believe they can manipulate national and cultural values as if their actions took place behind a wall, but they delude themselves if they think their deeds are not seen and their words not heard.

In our modern, globalized world, sewn together with the threads of immigration, economic

interdependence and communication, no civilization — no culture, religion or ethnicity — can live in isolation. What is not videotaped is faxed. What is not broadcast on radio is transmitted on the Internet. This is good. It gives us all the opportunity to have a sincere, genuine dialogue about the role our civilizations can play in enriching the future of mankind.

The Tehran Declaration of May 1999, issued at the Islamic Symposium on Dialogue among Civilizations, stated among its general principles respect for the dignity and equality of all human beings; genuine acceptance of cultural diversity; and mutual respect and tolerance for the views and values of different cultures and civilizations.

These are more than principles which Americans share. They are principles woven into the fabric of our national experience, and they are principles upon which we believe a wise and effective dialogue among civilizations can, in fact, be built.

Our ambitions for this dialogue should be great. In our globalized world, we should encourage, not hamper, the free flow of ideas. We should respect, not push aside, the values and beliefs of other cultures. We should cherish, not reject, the many manifestations of human diversity. The link between ignorance and violence cannot be ignored.

Culturally-based conflicts feed on prejudice, stereotypes, historical animosities and cynicism. So many tragedies have illuminated this fact for us. Now it is time for us to look into the fire yet again and bring the best qualities of our civilizations to bear on our problems, not the worst.

This dialogue among civilizations, in our opinion, is therefore an important and welcome initiative. We applaud and support it and look forward to its development in the months and years ahead.

Mr. Tuomiojia (Finland): At the outset, I would like to fully associate myself with the statement made by Mr. Louis Michel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, on behalf of the European Union, and I wish to make the following additional remarks.

Dialogue among civilizations is crucial for the enhancement of tolerance, mutual understanding and respect. Manifestations of intolerance arise from fear of the unknown, which at worst leads to conflicts and attacks against individuals. Open dialogue among individuals, peoples and cultures helps us to bring down barriers where they exist, or seem to exist.

For example, terrorist acts should not be linked to any particular religion or civilization. We know all too well from history that fanaticism, allied to any ideology or religion, can lead to blind hatred and violence. It is this kind of fanaticism and intolerance which is our common enemy.

As the Secretary-General has often emphasized, civilizations and cultures are not constant or immutable facts of history; they are always changing, growing, developing and adapting themselves to new times and new realities through interaction with each other. This interaction has created multi-ethnic and multicultural societies, rich and diverse in their heritage. Strict dichotomies between different cultures and civilizations are therefore unfounded, as is the oversimplified theory of a clash of civilizations.

A starting point in a dialogue among civilizations is the acknowledgement that the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Universal Declaration, together with the wide range of existing instruments adopted by the United Nations system concerning tolerance, human rights, cultural cooperation, science and education, constitutes a solid normative basis for the dialogue among civilizations.

Respect for human rights does not mean that differences between cultures would vanish. On the contrary, respect for diversity and the right to enjoy one's own culture are central elements of global ethics. The right of minorities and indigenous peoples to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion and to use their mother tongue has to be secured. We need systematic awareness-raising efforts regarding the history and the contributions of different minorities, indigenous peoples and other ethnic groups to the development of our contemporary societies. In this context, it is equally important that minorities themselves respect human rights, including those of women and girls.

It is our responsibility as Governments to ensure that dialogue is fully inclusive. Every individual, regardless of his or her status, must be able to participate in it. In this respect, I would particularly

like to emphasize the importance of the full and equal participation of women in all decision-making.

Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are necessary prerequisites for a true dialogue among civilizations. The media have an indispensable and instrumental role in the promotion of a dialogue. It is important that we ensure the independence of the media, so that they can effectively fulfil this task.

The Secretary-General has strongly advocated the culture of prevention. His report on the prevention of armed conflict was an important contribution to this end. One method of prevention is to increase knowledge and understanding within and between different cultures through an open dialogue. Training and education are essential in this respect, in particular human rights education. Education generates mutual respect, peaceful contacts and cooperation among people who belong to different religions, cultures or civilizations. I welcome the emphasis given to education in the global agenda for dialogue among civilizations.

The Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was a landmark in the context of global efforts to combat all forms of discrimination. We need to establish both multilateral and national mechanisms to implement the anti-discrimination agenda. As an example of a national-level mechanism to combat racial discrimination, I would like to mention that in Finland, the Office of Ombudsman for Minorities was established at the time of the Conference.

Finally, I would like to talk about children. Children are born without prejudices. The dialogue among civilizations should therefore begin with children. In her recent book, *The Impact of War on Children*, Ms. Graça Machel discusses a children's agenda for peace and security and emphasizes the importance of involving them as a resource. She noted that young people must not be seen as problems or victims, but, rather, as key contributors in the planning and implementation of long-term solutions. An excellent example of the contribution of children to peace and tolerance is the Children's Movement for Peace of Colombia.

The hideous acts of 11 September were a flagrant manifestation of blind hatred. We are determined to remain true and committed to our common aims, which by no coincidence are the very aims that terrorists attempt to undermine. The fight against terrorism is the fight for democracy. We have to stay united and vigorously promote the common values of humanity in order to prevent such attacks from taking place anywhere in the world in the future.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti Badan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Opertti (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the fact that this year and at this particular time the General Assembly can take another step towards facilitating and promoting the dialogue among civilizations and that it is commemorating the year devoted to this issue, as well as the provision and adoption of the measures necessary for its progress.

Since the birth of the United Nations, our country, Uruguay, has been firmly committed to the guiding principles of the Charter that inspired its creation, and it fully shares the view that dialogue can and should always — I repeat — always prevail over discord, and that what unites the different peoples of the world in their human condition is much more — above all much more essential — than what separates them.

When in 1998 it was proposed that this item be taken up and considered by the General Assembly, I was presiding over this important body, and I had then the special privilege of giving it my most enthusiastic support. From the outset, it was clear that this initiative by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran would open a new and promising door to channel a novel and valid form of cooperation among peoples and Governments that would go beyond economic cooperation, technical assistance and development assistance.

We share the view of Mr. Giandomenico Picco, the Secretary-General's Personal Representative, on this item, that while it has not been possible to achieve a satisfactory dialogue among civilizations thus far, far from representing an obstacle, this represents a greater challenge for those of us who believe that that is the line of action we should continue to take.

The various actions that have been taken allow us to maintain the hope that soon significant progress will be within the reach of all of us. We recall, among others actions, those taken by the Secretary-General, as contained in his report, document A/55/492/Rev.1; the

meeting of the heads of State of September 2000, held at Headquarters; the document entitled "Salzburg reflections", emanating from the meeting of August 2001; the conclusions of the Twenty-First Century Forum, a symposium that was held in Beijing, China, in September 2001; and the work being done by the Group of Eminent Persons selected by the Secretary-General, whom we heard this morning.

To this can be added today this high-level debate, whose outcome we hope will serve as guidelines for action to assist countries in the implementation of the world programme proposed in draft resolution A/56/L.3, which, of course, we support.

Today, more than ever, we must create and strengthen ties between peoples based on mutual knowledge, tolerance, understanding and the universal desire to promote peace and the rule of law. We will thus guarantee social, economic and political progress for all, regardless of differences, including those differences as an inherent part of reality.

In these times, in which the cruel experience of this country a few weeks ago has revealed to us how powerful the enemies of humanity are, how vulnerable our peoples are, how fragile our security is and what risks we are exposed to daily, the dialogue among civilizations is the only instrument that offers us extraordinary possibilities to contribute, through persuasion, to the prevention of conflicts, the suppression of rivalries and resentments and the strengthening of fraternity among nations.

Dialogue implies mutual respect. Dialogue necessarily leads to understanding and awareness, and from there, it brings the people of each civilization closer to the true essence of other civilizations. It clears up misunderstandings, eliminates prejudices — that great enemy of the human being, prejudice — and corrects errors. I therefore see in the dialogue among civilizations a genuinely useful and authentic tool, which the United Nations, as a forum that generously takes in the entire international community, should promote and develop to combat ignorance, intolerance, fundamentalist dogmatism of any kind and isolationism.

That is why the work being done by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to assess and reassess cultural diversity and to preserve the world's heritage is so important, as is the Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which it is elaborating and which we support.

Finally, our country, limited in geography but rich in history, which has always placed a high value on education, will continue its work in this field to contribute to the education of future generations of the world's civilizations, so that they can look each other in the eye without fear, hatred and preconceptions. The United Nations is the place, perhaps one of the best places, to galvanize and motivate that narrowing of differences, and in that we trust.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gabriel Orellana Rojas, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala.

Mr. Orellana Rojas (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since the General Assembly decided, in 1998, to proclaim the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, we have followed with keen interest the course of the debates on the subject at various seminars, conferences and roundtables. Our country has its roots in very ancient civilizations. We therefore understand the creative potential and also the risks of confrontation that cultural diversity brings. Our history, in fact, holds lessons derived from both possibilities. On the one hand, these lessons include the pain caused by a Western culture which imposes its values on an autochthonous one. On the other hand, they also embrace more recent initiatives, enshrined in the peace agreements concluded in December 1996, which establish juridical and political recognition to consolidate a multicultural, plurilingual and multiethnic State.

We realize that the very concept of a dialogue among civilizations can lead to misunderstandings. The idea of confrontation between cultures, ethnic groups or religions itself poses a risk of the first order to the values consecrated by the Charter, particularly as a result of the events that we have been living through since 11 September. This applies to the domestic policies of many of our countries and also relations among nations. What we have to seek today, more than ever before, is to extol diversity, venerate tolerance and promote dialogue, understanding and harmony. We must be guided by the need to emphasize the many things that unite us as human beings. For all these reasons, we applaud the felicitous initiative that has brought us together today.

This was the spirit that led us to subscribe, in March 1995, to the Agreement on the identity and rights of indigenous peoples. This Agreement recognizes the identity of the Maya, Garifuna and Xinca peoples, with a view to building national unity based on the respect for and exercise of the political, cultural, economic and spiritual rights of all Guatemalans. The Agreement seeks to combat de jure and de facto discrimination. It recognizes the particular vulnerability of indigenous women and creates an Office for the Defence of Indigenous Women's Rights. It als recognizes Mayan culture as the original basis of Guatemalan culture, and as an active and dynamic factor in the development and progress of society. The Agreement expressly recognizes that "educational and cultural policy must be oriented to focus on recognition, respect and encouragement of indigenous cultural values".

Finally, this agreement contains express commitments to civil, political, social and economic rights and establishes joint commissions, composed of representatives of the Government and of indigenous organizations, which are to follow up on the commitments assumed. Moreover, the peace agreements as a whole stress the value of respect for human rights, tolerance, participation, democracy and development, all of which are essential components of the subject of our debate.

This recent national experience also shapes our attitude on the international level. We thus thank the Secretary-General for the report issued under symbol A/56/523. We are also grateful to the countries that organized and contributed to the activities that this report describes. And we concur fully with the Secretary-General in that dialogue among civilizations is essential if we are to succeed in accomplishing one of the principal objectives of the United Nations, namely the prevention of conflicts. I would add to that idea the categorical imperative that development be pushed forward, since poverty and social inequality are the breeding ground for the tensions and confrontations that constitute the antithesis of what dialogue among civilizations seeks to achieve.

On an international level, the dialogue among civilizations has lost its territorial dimension. Advances in communication and, especially, unprecedented migration mean that dialogue among civilizations takes place every day between individual cultural agents, between neighbours in the same town or between colleagues. This leads to dialogue among multiple interlocutors, in which tolerance and understanding of differences becomes necessary because of the unexpected combinations of cultures and ideas. We must celebrate this manifold dialogue and the hybridization, interaction and metamorphosis that, in the long run, will destroy any fundamentalist and integrationist ideas of civilization.

We support the adoption of a programme of action that will sustain and give genuine content to the significant activities that have been undertaken pursuant to the mandates set out in General Assembly resolutions 53/22, 54/113 and 55/23, including the publication of the book *Crossing the Divide*. These activities concentrate and expand the principles and values enshrined in our Charter, and it is right to make of them an article of faith, and to recall them every day.

Mr. Jerandi (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to express on behalf of my delegation our thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report entitled "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations", and also his Personal Representative Mr. Picco and the Group of Eminent Persons for their efforts in preparing the document devoted to this issue. Although the idea of dialogue among civilizations is not new, the declaration of 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations had a unmistakable effect on the international community.

We are today more resolved than ever to give dialogue among civilizations its due place, especially in the new world context created by the terrorist acts that were unleashed against the United States on 11 September. These events have shown that such dialogue is absolutely essential and urgent. But it cannot be conceived solely as a counter-attack against terrorism; it should be seen as a way of bringing peoples together and spreading peace.

In this respect, the President of the Republic of Tunisia, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, urged the leaders of the world, the forces of good and men who are wise and shape opinion to intensify their efforts to prevent public opinion or relations between peoples from sliding, as a result of a conjuction of events, towards the re-emergence of the spectre of confrontation between religions, which are in essence, and through the nobility of their goals, sources of tolerance, dialogue and solidarity.

Our President also declared:

> "The future of security, stability and development in the world depends on whether we can enshrine principles of mutual understanding and tolerance between peoples. We are determined, for our part, to spare no effort that might contribute to furthering this goal."

Tunisia — a crossroads, a meeting place for many civilizations, with a rich, 3,000-year-long history — has always worked to bring peoples together and to reinforce the links between different civilizations. Modern Tunisia will continue to defend this ideal and to work to promote tolerance, diversity, dialogue and harmony. On the basis of this conviction, the President of the Republic just announced, on 7 November 2001, that a university chair for dialogue among civilizations and religions was being set up.

Since very soon we will be host to an international symposium on the dialogue among civilizations, organized jointly with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Tunisia will do all it can to ensure that this meeting is an important stage in humankind's steady search for ways to enshrine these noble principles and to protect them against all potential dangers.

We are convinced that the dialogue among civilizations should be open to all and be based upon the principles set out in the United Nations Charter. The dialogue among civilizations starts by recognizing the equality of all civilizations and their successive contributions to humanity, with no pretensions to superiority. We also consider that dialogue presupposes that all civilizations are of equal importance, that none of them can claim to be supreme, and that because of this, the dialogue among civilizations must necessarily mean that we reject exclusion and interference; it means greater understanding, tolerance and respect for others.

We consider that the essence of the dialogue among civilizations is to advocate cultural and religious diversity, which is a source of vitality and not a cause of division and confrontation. The dialogue will be possible only if we accept the fact that the international community as a whole shares the common values of tolerance and liberty and expresses the unshakable wish to live in a world where human rights are universally respected.

With the end of bipolar division, our world is now faced with the phenomenon of globalization, which seems more and more to be governing international relations and showing how deep and complex human diversity is in every way. We must make sure that this phenomenon of globalization provides equal opportunities for all, without imposing on one group or another any particular cultural or economic system. Maintaining and promoting identities and protecting cultural and civilizational traditions should not threaten peace and security and serve as a pretext for exclusion or ultra-nationalism. On the contrary, interaction among cultures, a result of globalization, should preserve the diversity and richness of different civilizations.

Our duty is to do everything we can to make the world a better place, and to this end the international community must shoulder its responsibilities, put right the wrongs and find just, equitable and lasting solutions to the conflicts that have been going on for so long. We hope that the year 2001, the international Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, will offer a specific and viable solution for the Palestinian question, because the Palestinian people continue to suffer humiliation and flagrant violations of their fundamental rights, and day after day the denial of their inalienable right to a State on their own territory with Al-Quds as the capital.

It is equally important that, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the United Nations should deal equally with all causes, without distinction. We continue to believe firmly that this is the best place for dialogue to take place, based on the principles of equality, justice, tolerance and respect for international law.

Mr. Simão (Mozambique): Mr. President, I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you upon your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. I am sure that under your able guidance our deliberations will be crowned with success. I also wish to congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for his outstanding work during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

I would like to seize this opportunity to reiterate our profound sympathy and solidarity with the people and the Government of the United States of America for the tragic events of 11 September. We also share the

pain and sorrow of those nations and all the bereaved families who lost citizens on that tragic day.

Allow me also to reiterate my Government's unequivocal condemnation of international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Terrorism is, indeed, a great threat to international peace and security that requires strong and concerted commitment and action of all nations of the world. It is vital that the United Nations remain central to international efforts to combat terrorism and every threat to international peace and security. These efforts must be directed at both suppressing and preventing these threats, including the threat of international terrorism. As reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration,

> "the United Nations is the indispensable common house of the entire human family, through which we will seek to realize our universal aspirations for peace, cooperation and development".

At this juncture, I wish to pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan upon his being awarded the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize. Awarding this prize to Kofi Annan and the United Nations is a clear demonstration of the recognition of the role that the world body and its Secretary-General have played as guarantor of international peace and security.

Once again, Mozambique salutes His Excellency President Khatami of Iran for his initiative of proposing to this world body the discussion of such a transcendent subject. The dialogue among civilizations is of fundamental importance to the future of humanity. Dialogue among civilizations is of fundamental importance to the future of humanity. Dialogue among civiliations is an essential element in promoting peace and tolerance throughout the world. This dialogue must seek to permanently promote inclusion, equity, equality and tolerance in human interaction.

Our heads of State and Government affirmed last year at the Millennium Summit that tolerance is one of the fundamental values essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. They also affirmed the need to actively promote a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, with human beings respecting one another in all their diversity of belief, culture and language, neither fearing nor repressing differences within and between societies, but cherishing them as a precious asset of humanity.

It is in the same spirit that my delegation believes that a meaningful search for lasting peace and prosperity in the world, a task we are committed to, must be based on a permanent dialogue both within and among nations, civilizations and groups. An effective promotion of a culture of peace and tolerance should also be reflected at both the individual and national levels within our own States. In this regard, politicians, religious and community leaders, the media and civil society in general must take the lead.

It is essential that every individual, regardless of his or her culture and values, make an effort to appreciate and respect the culture and values of other human beings. Minorities and communities within our societies should be encouraged to participate in every social activity that seeks to foster the sense of common belonging and should feel free to bring along their individual culture and values as an important contribution to building a harmonious and tolerant society. Only such a dialogue, based on respect for human dignity and the philosophical, religious, political and cultural diversity that characterize our world, will indeed lead us to an enhanced mutual understanding and respect among civilizations.

Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Our reality today makes this need increasingly urgent. Globalization is not only about political, economic and technology interactions among nations; it is also about an enhanced interaction among peoples of more diverse cultures, races and ethnicities than ever witnessed before. In order to meet the challenges posed by these realities, we must endeavour to promote peace, stability and development in the world. The most solid common ground towards the realization of that end is undoubtedly a continuous and open dialogue based on acceptance of our cultural diversity and the right to be differen Our cultural and social differences should therefore be seen not as elements of disunity, but as sources of strength and desire for a common future and a better future for all.

What is meant by a culture of peace and tolerance? In the segment on a dialogue among civilizations in the course of the Millennium Summit, President Chissano sought to provide an answer based on our own experience by defining a culture of peace and tolerance as

"a set of values, attitudes and behaviours, ways of living and acting, based on respect for life, the dignity and rights of the human person, rejection of violence, including all forms of terrorism, and commitment to the principles of freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance and understanding among all people, all groups in society and among individuals".

It is in this spirit that Mozambique has actively participated in several initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue within the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Organization of African Unity and the Southern African Development Community, as well as other organizations and national initiatives, as a sign of its strong commitment to searching for lasting solutions to conflicts in the world.

The efforts to promote understanding among civilizations, stability and prosperity in the world will not prevail unless the root causes of conflicts that continue to devastate many parts of the world, in particular Africa, are seriously addressed.

Mozambique strongly believes that poverty inevitably leads to aggravated conflicts. Poverty, as revealed in many parts of the world, breads intolerance as it leads to the perception that some sectors of society are more advantaged than others, which are left with no hope. We believe that peace and tolerance will remain unattainable for as long as the majority of our populations go stomach-empty. Therefore, the fight against poverty, particularly absolute poverty, is an essential element of fruitful dialogue among different civilizations and social groups.

It is on this understanding that the Government's social and economic development programme gives the highest priority to poverty alleviation. The Programme of Action on Absolute Poverty Reduction, which was recently adopted for the period 2001-2005, regards education, heath and rural development as key to poverty reduction. By adopting this Programme, we seek to make Mozambique a better place to live.

We believe that the proclamation by the General Assembly of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations brings additional impetus to the promotion of the concept of dialogue among civilizations as a cornerstone of facing the challenges of building and maintaining enduring peace in the world. This impetus comes in addition to many other initiatives, such as the proclamation by the General Assembly of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace and the proclamation of the period 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

These initiatives create an opportunity to mobilize all international and national actors to work together to assert a culture of non-violence based on the concepts of the culture of peace, tolerance and dialogue. It is our hope that these concepts will develop and acquire deserved recognition in international relations so that the culture of reaction is gradually replaced by a culture of prevention.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): As the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations draws to a close, there is need to take stock of where we stand and where we go from here in further promoting this concept and its practice. The Secretary-General's report on the observance of the Year, contained in document A/56/523, is useful to us in making such an assessment and in deciding on a future course of action. We thank him and his personal representative, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, for the report and for their prodigious efforts.

Allow me to express through you, Sir, our profound and sincere gratitude to President Mohammad Khatami for his most inspiring remarks this morning focused on the subject. We are beholden to his country, the Islamic Republic of Iran, for the enormous contribution it has made towards advancing the ideal embodied in the concept. Iran itself is the cradle of an ancient civilization, contacts with which have perennially enriched the world.

We should also like to thank the Group of Eminent Persons for its work, which enhances our understanding of the many dimensions of such dialogue.

We live in turbulent times. The rapid pace of globalization is bringing peoples, societies and cultures into close interaction. Information is shared at the speed of light. Money, goods and, to a lesser extent, human beings have unprecedented mobility. Values and ideas permeate global divides with facility. Civilizations are drawn closer to one another as they have never been before.

We are aware though, that proximity has not always advanced understanding or a sharing of values. Consciousness of distinctions and recognition of differences have also bred rejection. This process of rejection has the sad potential to cause humanity to turn its back on centuries of accomplishment. Such rejection could give rise to exclusion, intolerance and even, at times, hatred. Ideas, values and practices of others can be dismissed as strange. This could, as we well know, lead to horrendous consequences.

In a post-11 September world, we have to convert the monologue of dominance into a dialogue of accommodation. For that, we need to recognize once again the values of dialogue among civilizations. In paragraph 20 of his report (A/56/523), the Secretary-General pointed out that such dialogue "may be a soft tool of diplomacy but, in the long term, it can prevail". Those are, indeed, wise words.

Dialogue among civilizations has to be vigorously pursued across all divides in its broadest manifestation. Obviously, the United Nations is the right forum for this purpose. The Secretary-General has highlighted how the dialogue is critical to promoting the two main objectives of the Organization: conflict prevention and resolution, and economic and social development.

We must maintain the momentum generated by the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We are encouraged by the many initiatives organized by a host of actors during the Year. We are heartened by the burgeoning sense of optimism it has already created. We now look to the beginning of real dialogue and more concrete achievements.

To take the work forward, the General Assembly has before it for consideration a draft global agenda. We are a co-sponsor of the draft resolution in document A/56/L.3, which contains that draft agenda. It not only recounts the objectives of the dialogue, which we aspire to realize, but also lays down a clear course of action for its diligent pursuit. We commend its adoption to all.

Its adoption should not — must not — be an end in itself. The idea is that it should create an enabling framework to institutionalize the dialogue. States, international and regional organizations and civil society will need to work in partnership and cooperation to that end. Let me stress here that the involvement of all strata of society in the dialogue, including women, children and vulnerable groups, will be critical to its success. Overcoming exclusion and discrimination and promoting tolerance and understanding require the blessings of all.

Bangladesh will continue to support this noble goal in every possible way. As a pluralist society, we are fully persuaded that a critical ingredient of democracy is the tolerance of distinctiveness. In order to create a peaceful and harmonious world, differences must be not only acknowledged and tolerated, but also celebrated. For beauty in the garden of God lies in variety.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Colombia would like to thank the Islamic Republic of Iran for having promoted the initiative of the international Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for having prepared a report on this issue; his Personal Representative, Mr. Giandomenico Picco; and the Group of Eminent Persons. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also deserves credit for its worthy efforts to promote and strengthen the idea of dialogue among civilizations, and for its contributions in that area.

Throughout the 50 years of its existence, the United Nations has shown us that, in the absence of a daily dialogue among nations of various civilizations, peace is ephemeral. It has been demonstrated that on the basis of respect, understanding and mutual tolerance among States and different cultures, a world can be built in which dignity, human rights, solidarity, hope and peace prevail.

We support the Secretary-General's statement:

> "The United Nations itself was created in the belief that dialogue can triumph over discord, that diversity is a universal virtue, and that the peoples of the world are far more united by common fate than they are divided by their separate identities."

We do not doubt that the new threats to international peace and security will require that the United Nations system and its key role in the search for open and universal dialogue be further strengthened.

Our Organization is the obvious forum in which to hold a constructive, open, respectful and productive dialogue among various nations and cultures — a

dialogue based on tolerance, mutual understanding and respect for diversity; one that cultivates the intellect, encouraging an understanding of the various cultures and civilizations and consolidating friendship among our peoples. Such a dialogue will strengthen universal cooperation, solidarity and peace, rooted in respect for the principle of the equality of rights and self-determination of peoples.

Current circumstances require us to undertake a dialogue based on shared values, such as respect for life, defence of human dignity, equality among all and protection of the environment. Such a dialogue would be a tool of transformation, an example of peace and tolerance and a celebration of diversity and cultural and religious pluralism, which are among humanity's greatest riches.

This challenge is even more important in the context of globalization, which, more than ever before, has emphasized interdependence among all the nations of the world. Such interdependence will make it possible for us to better understand the common destiny of humanity and to strengthen an authentic culture of solidarity. In order for dialogue to be effective, we must preserve cultural diversity while ensuring the more equitable distribution of the benefits and costs of globalization, in the interests of developing countries in particular.

The Year of Dialogue among Civilizations provides us with an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate diversity and to seek a new system of relations based on inclusion. The aim is to foster a universal dialogue with the active participation of Governments, whose job it is to encourage and promote such a dialogue; international and regional organizations, which must adopt measures and organize events so as to facilitate it; and the United Nations, which must continue to promote and strengthen a culture of dialogue among civilizations as the foundation of its own activities.

This high-level debate on the scope and aim of the dialogue among civilizations must result in a firm commitment on the part of all States Members of the United Nations. There must be an exchange of views and we must make room for analysis and investigation that will make it possible to devise forms of dialogue and concerted action. We must therefore join in the important efforts being undertaken by UNESCO, within the context of its medium-term strategy, to encourage academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and international institutions to become involved.

The scheduling of conferences, workshops and seminars, with the participation of civil society, Governments, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, will be a valuable contribution to achieving this end. My delegation acknowledges the importance of some of the initiatives that have been taken in recent months to promote dialogue among civilizations, including the International Conference in Tokyo and Kyoto; the Salzburg dialogue among civilizations; the Tehran Declaration; the Twenty-First Century Forum in Beijing; and the Vilnius Conference.

As a co-sponsor of the draft resolution entitled "Global agenda for dialogue among civilizations", Colombia trusts that it will be adopted, as it is of decisive importance for the process of building a universal culture based on dialogue and respect for diversity.

To us belongs the enormous responsibility of planting the seeds of dialogue so that we may later reap the harvest of peace, development, well-being and respect for human rights. We should take up the challenge of managing public affairs on the basis of inclusion, not exclusion. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan has stated categorically, peace begins in the minds of those who perceive diversity as a factor in improvement and growth. We must once and for all overcome a past of discord, intolerance and rejection of diversity in order to make progress together in this new century towards a universal culture in which harmony among nations, respect for our differences and solidarity prevail.

Mr. Duval (Canada) (*spoke in French*): In 1993, on the occasion of the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, all Member States of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and reaffirmed that human rights are universal, interdependent, interrelated and indivisible. This shared view is the basis for our dialogue today.

Canada congratulates President Khatami of Iran and the Secretary-General's Personal Representative, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, on their efforts to engage Governments, international organizations and civil society in a dialogue that seeks to promote and protect

respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and welcomes diversity. The free exchange of ideas between all members of society will further our understanding of each others' cultures and will encourage us to recognize that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms lies at the foundation of all cultures.

Tolerance, respect for diversity and adapting to and accommodating change are fundamental to peaceful and prosperous coexistence and to the development and stability of societies and peoples. Indeed, they are part of the foundation of physical safety and security. The dramatic events of 11 September have shown us how that safety and security can be challenged. In the face of such global challenges, our efforts to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, dialogue and exchange should not falter.

New communications technologies, human migration, increased travel, trade liberalization and increasing interest in other cultures have increased intercultural and interpersonal contacts, giving rise to a richness of diversity as well as the challenge of managing such diversity. For Canada, embracing diversity within a framework of democratic values and respect for human rights is the wellspring of both the economic and the social vitality of our society. As a bilingual and multicultural society, Canada views the diversity of its society as a fundamental characteristic of its identity and as one of its greatest and most precious assets. Canadians have understood that respecting identity and accepting, promoting and preserving diversity make it possible to build bridges among peoples, communities and nations.

We encourage, and will participate in, similar actions at the international level in the hope of encouraging greater understanding between people. For example, Canada has strongly supported the initiative of the United Nations Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organizations that recently resulted in the unanimous approval of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada is also careful to ensure that measures to foster respect for cultural diversity are not barriers to full participation by all in civil, economic, cultural, social and political life, or to the enjoyment of human security. Otherwise, they defeat their own purpose.

For dialogue to successfully contribute to understanding between people of different backgrounds and cultures it must include a broad range of participants. A successful dialogue is dependent upon the full and effective participation of women and girls. Their experiences and perspectives are an essential part of any meaningful dialogue. At the Beijing+5 special session of the General Assembly, in June 2000, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to promoting the full participation and empowerment of women. In Canada we have also looked to the vitality and creativity of children and youth in promoting cross-cultural understanding apd tolerance. The contribution of Canada's aboriginal peoples to the foundations of our country is of essential importance.

To be meaningful, dialogue must also be undertaken in a free and open climate. True dialogue is possible only when the freedoms of expression and association and the freedoms of thought, conscience and belief are respected. To be sustainable and meaningful, dialogue must look to developing effective tools for promoting and protecting human rights. We need to create tools to ensure that diversity is a means of improving security and participation, a means of strengthening cultural expression and creating prosperity and realizing that all nations benefit from the opportunities afforded by the global environment.

Education is a key tool in the fight to eradicate racism and other forms of discrimination and intolerance. Recognizing that educational systems build attitudes and shape behaviours, we must ensure that our schools incorporate the contributions of individuals of diverse backgrounds in teaching activities and in the curriculum. Steps should be taken to ensure that we do not reinforce negative stereotypes or promote intolerance among our youth.

Yet another key tool is the development of public awareness initiatives to promote respect for diversity at the national, regional and international levels. We wholeheartedly agree with the Secretary-General when he says that cultural and religious diversity is a source of strength, and that dialogue is possible if we accept that we live in a diverse world and share the same values of tolerance, freedom and respect for universal human rights. We the peoples of the United Nations must recommit ourselves to open and meaningful dialogue to ensure tolerance and respect for diversity. We need to realize our shared values of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We are committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and to their universal application. These are commitments that we as States have made to each other, and we have also made them to our citizens in order to achieve a safe, peaceful world rich in diversity and respect.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Some commentators have interpreted the events of 11 September and the developments thereafter as a clash of civilizations. Those who had pronounced inevitable the advent of such a clash seemed almost pleased to see their "vision" come true. We believe that they are wrong. Terrorism is neither an expression of, nor for that matter confined to, any particular civilization. Rather, it is a scourge that exists world-wide and indeed constitutes the denial and destruction of all civilizations.

Advocating the idea of a clash of civilizations as a way of understanding the worst terrorist attacks in the history of humanity is dangerous. However, it would be equally dangerous to deny the fact that the risk of such a clash exists more than ever after 11 September. Unless we are able to join forces in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect, we might indeed be headed for such a clash. This is how the United Nations is challenged today and is why the initiative launched by President Khatami offers such an important opportunity.

The United Nations — "We the peoples", as the Charter puts it so aptly — is certainly the natural forum in which to conduct such a dialogue, an essential part of our answer not only to terrorism, but also to intolerance, racism and social exclusion. The International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations is coming to an end shortly, but it was of course meant to galvanize an ongoing process to whose success we all have a unique opportunity to contribute. Our first contribution must be the creation of the prerequisites for such a dialogue.

There can be dialogue within and among civilizations only if people are given a voice. The dialogue must be fully inclusive and participatory; it is to be held not among Governments, but among people. As Governments, we are obliged to create the conditions under which a dialogue can take place. Freedom of expression and the forums and means through which to conduct such a dialogue are prerequisites for holding it. Access to information, the media and information technology are crucial as well. The recent developments in information and communications technology provide us with unprecedented opportunities to engage with other people all around the world — but, of course, only those of us who have access to these technologies. Bridging the digital divide must thus form part of our efforts to launch a dialogue. Moreover, giving a voice to those who have something to say is possible only if they have been given education, the most basic and often still unmet prerequisite for an ongoing and sustained dialogue. Finally, the United Nations and all of us are challenged to be role models, to live the concept of dialogue among civilizations and nations. We have a tendency to take for granted the opportunity to conduct such a dialogue on a daily basis, while in fact it is an immense privilege. We must wonder if we always make optimal use of it.

The dialogue we seek to establish requires not merely the willingness to do so but also very concrete action in the areas I have just mentioned. Carrying out a genuine dialogue, based on both speaking and listening, on giving and taking, requires more: curiosity, openness, a willingness to learn and to share. We agree with those who say that diversity is an opportunity, not a threat. But we all know that it is often perceived as a threat. Diversity poses a challenge in that it forces us to look at ourselves. Realizing that things can be done differently from the way we are accustomed to doing them may make us question our own ways. This presents a great opportunity, but it can also create unease, because it disturbs the comfort level inherent in the preservation of the state of affairs and in inertia. We must therefore develop and spread the understanding that diversity is an expression of neither inferiority nor superiority. If such an understanding were to be the only result of the process of the dialogue among civilizations, we would consider that a great achievement in itself.

A civilization is not static, not a final product of a historical process. Quite to the contrary, a civilization needs to constantly evolve, adapt and change. These are the very actions that ensure its long-term development and survival. If we look at the civilization of which we are a part — Western civilization — it is quite obvious that its constituent elements are not identical to those of a few centuries ago.

In the era of globalization, this fact becomes particularly significant. The process of global intercultural exchange takes place largely unimpeded and, most important, at unprecedented speed. There is understandable concern that globalization may lead not only to a further and deepened division between the haves and the have-nots, but also to the predominance of one civilization over the others. Globalization will work only if it works for everybody. A dialogue among civilizations must contribute to shaping the forces of globalization in a culturally sound and sustainable manner that preserves the richness of diversity.

The United Nations has been given a natural role of leadership in this process. However, dialogue also can and must be promoted by other bodies. We draw the Assembly's attention in particular to the work of the Council of Europe, whose Committee of Ministers Liechtenstein had the honour to chair until a few days ago. At its most recent session, the Ministers expressed their determination to promote a wide intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, in particular to face the manifold threats posed by terrorism. This determination is part of its wider commitment to develop strong democracies based on diversity and social justice. Through its long-standing and intensive experience in the area of cultural exchange, the Council of Europe is perfectly placed to make a significant contribution to the dialogue among civilizations, and we commend its work to the attention of the Assembly.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to express our gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his report, containing, as it does, valuable information that is bound to reinforce our debate within the framework of this item.

I should also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the great efforts of Mr. Giandomenico Picco, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The year 2001 is the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and the heads of State and Government at last year's Millennium Assembly agreed to a number of obligations to develop a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, and to make all possible efforts to settle disagreements and overcome conflicts and obstacles that divide nations and peoples. In view of this, we were surprised to find the enemies of this dialogue rushing to abort the idea of this constructive human gathering by escalating organized terrorism against innocent people. Such terrorism was embodied in the attacks of 11 September. It is also embodied in State terrorism based on occupation, racial discrimination and religious and ethnic extremism, which will only lead to ruin and destruction, such as that witnessed daily by the Palestinian people in territories occupied by Israel.

The repercussions of these kinds of terrorism, in addition to the continued presence of hotbeds of clashes, armed conflicts, occupation, acts of violence, the arms race among States, the emergence of serious human rights violations and the spread of the scourges of transboundary organized crime, drugs and prohibited arms have given the subject of the dialogue among civilizations an urgent importance. It is one of the best means, along with the political and diplomatic efforts and other frameworks of international cooperation, for spreading the humanitarian principles of forgiveness, solidarity and cooperation, which oppose all forms of extremism, discrimination and hatred and usually constitute the main source feeding the dangerous repercussions in all these challenges.

We also affirm that terrorist acts, ethnic cleansing practices and other grave violations of human rights experienced in many areas of the world during the last couple of years have proved that their perpetrators do not belong to one particular nationality, religion or race, but rather have different origins and different political, religious and ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, we are greatly concerned about the continued prejudiced campaigns of discrimination, hatred and distortion that many Zionist and Western media and other organizations engage in to link the Arabs and Muslims to terrorism, specifically at a time when these campaigns constitute a main source for building up hatred and discrimination among peoples and confrontations among civilizations. Accordingly, we strongly call on the Western States, as part of this dialogue and as a first step, to re-examine their prejudiced policies with regard to the issues and conflicts of Arab and Muslim States and to adopt measures necessary for confronting all the hostile, provocative and discriminatory practices committed daily against the peoples of these States.

The benefits of the opportunities for social and economic links provided by globalization, modern communications technology and the Internet during the last decade have contributed, regrettably, to producing the so-called "generalized" culture among younger generations and college graduates, who have come to prefer being associated with the tools and languages of the developed States, which refrain from showing the cultural diversity of other peoples and civilizations, specifically those of the developing countries. Accordingly, we believe in the importance of continued interaction between the local and international spheres. At the same time, we affirm the importance of ensuring that the ideologies of the developed States do not control the tools of modern globalization. These tools should be enriched with the diversity and unique multiculturalism of different peoples regardless of their origins and backgrounds. We also consider that any dialogue among civilizations within this framework should be based on the foundations of respect for human dignity, the principles of justice, transparency and equality among peoples — away from the discrimination and double standards that many powerful States continue to practise in regard to the issues and interests of the developing States and their peoples.

Dealing with the subject of the dialogue among civilizations leads us towards studying and understanding the historical bases and the components of the heritage, culture and science that shaped these civilizations. Furthermore, it is well known that the Arab homeland area, to which the Emirates belongs, was a cradle of ancient civilizations and religions. The last of these was Islam, which spread as a religion, philosophy and tolerant ideology not only for the peoples there but also for many areas of the world.

The United Arab Emirates is committed to passing various laws and educational programmes that strengthen human and ethical values and the principles of respecting other peoples' traditions and beliefs, based on the original Arabic traditions that are derived from the principles of the Holy Koran and Islamic culture that call for forgiveness, equality, solidarity and respect for the cultural diversity between peoples. The United Arab Emirates has also ensured the freedom of the foreign minorities residing in the country to practise their religious rituals and cultural and social activities. It has encouraged, all year-round, the holding of cultural forums and symposiums and the attraction of intellectuals, journalists, exhibits and folkloric music bands to enrich the knowledge and openness of the Emirates society towards the diverse concepts and ideas of other civilizations, while taking into consideration its adherence to its unique heritage, ancestors and environment.

On the international level, the United Arab Emirates has been active in concluding many agreements, memorandums of understanding and cultural, informational and educational exchanges on the bilateral, regional and international levels, in addition to participating in conferences and intellectual, artistic and philosophical forums around the world. This has led to its enrichment and interaction and cooperation with the civilizations and concepts of other peoples.

In conclusion, we support the suggestions to enhance the programmes and mechanisms of a comprehensive dialogue that is based on the concepts of understanding and realizing the problems, concerns and aims of other peoples without denying their national rights, enslaving them or interfering in their internal affairs. We hope our efforts, within the framework of this item, will constitute a positive step towards strengthening the example of the dialogue among civilizations as a new approach and tool in the nature of international relations. Such a tool will contribute to the eradication of division and to the enrichment of diversity, understanding and convergence of opinions, as well as supporting understanding, cooperation and openness among States and peoples to inspire the joint efforts reinforcing sustainable development and enhancing peace and security and spreading harmony and peaceful coexistence free from all kinds of fear, injustice, deprivation, violence, hatred, poverty and the dangerous repercussions of destructive wars.

Mr. Shrestha (Nepal): It is a matter of supreme pleasure to have this opportunity to express my view before this Assembly of representatives of Member States of the United Nations. While thanking the President for the opportunity granted to me to make this statement, I also wish to express my sincere appreciation for the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. It is heartening to know that in pursuit of General Assembly resolution 53/22 of 4 November 1998 to proclaim 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, several action programmes have

been successfully conducted with the active support and cooperation of Governments and relevant non-governmental organizations at the initiative of the General Assembly.

Nothing could be more important than bringing the representatives of different Governments, divergent groups and differing faiths to a common forum to discuss the issue that concerns mankind so that the disruptive forces with a high propensity to threaten the prospects of peace in society and the world at large would be mitigated.

The appropriateness of having chosen the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations cannot be exaggerated at this juncture, at a time when the world, overcast by the dark shadows of tensions that are threatening to erupt, is in desperate need of a road map towards peace.

As a nation committed to the principles of democracy and human rights, Nepal is always happy to see the United Nations working to uphold the cause of mankind. Perceived as the last hope of humanity, the United Nations has often demonstrated its efficacy in preventing the world from being caught up in the whirlwind of confrontation.

The catastrophic terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September have once again made the United Nations the focus of attention and a source of confidence for people. The deaths of thousands of innocent human beings from many countries, not to mention the financial losses that have adversely affected the global economy, have pierced and pricked the conscience of the civilized world. Nepal, which has complete faith in the United Nations Charter, promptly decided to side with all decisions taken by this world body to fight the threat of terrorism on a global scale.

A sustained, continuous and coordinated international effort must be made until the threat of terrorism is eradicated, whatever its origin. Terrorism is the antithesis of peace, which is the most cherished commodity in today's world. The call for peace is universal, but, sadly, all are not equally prepared to work to create an atmosphere in which peace reigns supreme and makes prosperity for mankind possible. This lacuna has to be addressed through the use of the weapon of dialogue by all civilized nations and communities. Nothing is more precious than the chance to have a meeting of minds that are looking to create a better world in which to live.

The series of conferences that have been held in various parts of the world — under the sponsorship of the United Nations and with the active cooperation of one of its key agencies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) — which have been attended by a number of countries, have done a laudable job of bringing different civilizations together to thrash out ideas on a common goal for the good of mankind. Such commendable activities should be made as inclusive and comprehensive as possible, so as to accommodate all of the major civilizations of the world. In keeping with the spirit of the United Nations, all such efforts should be geared towards embracing all of mankind, which is living under diverse civilizational conditions.

May I submit that the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, promulgated in 1991, is a by-product of dialogue among the major political forces of the country. It is a creation of national consensus. It has provided a vast umbrella under which people of different races, castes, creeds and ethnicities can live in harmony and mutual respect. Dialogue is the device of democracy which is used to banish delusions, doubts and distortions from the human mind. But, regrettably, the democratic polity of Nepal has, over the last 70 months, witnessed some acts of insurgency. The insurgents, who prefer to be branded as Maoists, tend, though they are concentrated in certain far-flung mountainous areas of the country, to stage a display of their ascendancy wherever or whenever possible.

Their acts of violence, though scattered and sporadic, have resulted in the deaths of more than 1,700 people, including police personnel, rebels and innocent civilians. To avoid any further loss of life and also to accelerate the pace of development — which the people desperately need — the Government of the Kingdom of Nepal, instead of resorting, in the first instance, to the use of force, has asked for dialogue in order to devise a mutually acceptable formula for good governance of the country that would not jeopardize the fundamentals of the Constitution. Rounds of talks between the representatives of the Government and the insurgent Maoists are still going on.

We are fully convinced that terrorism in any form cannot be justified, whatever its circumstances. It deserves outright condemnation and censure. However, we feel that terrorists can easily profit from the frustrations of people who are destined to live under conditions of social and economic deprivation. We

need a restructured socio-economic order that promises to put human civilization in the proper perspective. To achieve this goal, a Government must serve as a catalyst, guardian, facilitator or regulator, depending upon the circumstances prevailing in a given society.

Aware of this fact, the Government of Nepal has recently taken drastic socio-economic measures to place our socially and economically backward communities at centre stage in order speedily to improve their quality of life. The process of dialogue can always be facilitated through the creation of an environment in which social, economic and political justice is visibly available.

All of the major religions and faiths, placed in their proper perspective, have as a common goal the promotion of the cause of mankind in a selfless spirit of service to others. It is the occasional distortions, obduracy and intransigence on the part of self-proclaimed heirs to the prophets, preachers, seers and saints which have given rise to hatred and conflict and to clashes among the adherents of different religions.

Confrontation leads to greater confrontation. What is needed is a process of dialogue, which opens the door for people to understand others' viewpoints and also to make others understand one's own viewpoints. After all, civilization is but an assimilation of the collective efforts of human beings to achieve a better life.

Mr. Kára (Czech Republic): While we may continue to clarify the notion of dialogue among civilizations, and while we may choose to speak of only one civilization embracing all the astonishing diversity of humankind, there is little doubt about substance and relevance of our current discussion. Indeed, dialogue between representatives of various cultures, ethnic groups, religions or societal models in our globalized, interconnected and interdependent world seems to take on greater importance with every new challenge we face.

My delegation therefore wishes to express its deep appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Iran and to all of those who helped to start this process, as well as to the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, for their invaluable contributions, which have resulted in, among other things, the enlightening book *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*, which was recently published. Our special thanks also go to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

A number of speakers over the last two days have contrasted dialogue and terrorism, pointing out that the dividing lines are not between cultures and religions, but between the "civilized" and the "barbaric". My delegation fully endorses such a view. We are also, with others, convinced of the power of dialogue, through emphasizing common values, to help prevent the conflicts and problems of this world.

Since the Czech Republic aligned itself with the statement made this morning on behalf of the European Union by the representative of Belgium, let me confine myself to just a few remarks concerning my country's specific input into the dialogue. I refer to the series of Forum 2000 conferences, which has been organized every year since 1997 in Prague under the auspices of Mr. Václav Havel, the President of the Czech Republic. It brings together eminent personalities with different cultural, religious or ethnic backgrounds with the aim of exchanging views, sharing values and looking for both visionary and practical solutions to problems of the contemporary world. The outcome of the last of these conferences, the Prague Declaration of 17 October 2001, has been made available to all delegations in document A/56/498. I am sure that a number of areas and activities covered by the Declaration and the Forum 2000 process are in perfect harmony with respective elements of the proposed Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action. We therefore fully support and co-sponsor the respective draft resolution we are about to adopt.

It is very encouraging to see the growing list of activities within the framework of today's agenda item at global, regional, national and local levels. Let us all hope that the Global Agenda will lay down a solid foundation for continuing and enhancing the dialogue.

Ms. Alhashimi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today the General Assembly is discussing a topic that may provide a glimmer of hope in the midst of a world experiencing a state of indescribable terror caused by wars, bombs, smart missiles, the lacerated corpses of children and the images of displaced women, elderly and children who have managed to escape launched rockets. Cold, starvation and death await them at every moment in a world where most people are chafing under the yoke of war, marginalization, backwardness,

sanctions, poverty and inequality. Therefore, while discussing the dialogue among civilizations seems to contradict today's reality, it nonetheless constitutes fertile ground for philanthropic attempts to spare the human race the spectre of pain and suffering, curb the dangers of hegemony, domination and control of the destinies of the world's peoples and the imposition of specific life patterns on them.

Iraq's firm belief in cultural diversity and in the inevitability of dialogue among civilizations is a natural extension of our ancient civilizational heritage, whose roots reach back more than 5,000 years. That heritage is embodied in the civilization of Mesopotamia, which embraced the Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Akkadian, Arab and Islamic civilizations, and was a centre of international cultural enlightenment.

Human civilization is the same anywhere and at any time. It is the real expression of human particularity. There is no superior or inferior civilization. Every civilization has its own components and particularities. Therefore, interaction among civilizations contributes to their mutual enrichment and to building common bridges for human prosperity.

In order to arrive at an effective and serious dialogue among civilizations, there are some basic principles on which it must be based. The first principle is respect for basic human rights, paying due regard to cultural diversity on the basis of respect for human values and equality among peoples and the acceptance of this diversity as an inherent characteristic of human society. This dialogue must be based on tolerance, respect for people's religious values, renunciation of discrimination against certain civilizations, respect for people's decisions in choosing their social, political, economic and cultural systems, the creation of a democratic international economic order — which should not be the preserve of one Power, for controlling the world's destiny and channelling it to serve its national interests — an order based on justice and the rules of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The dialogue should not be marked by the concepts of force or the threat of its use. In his message of 29 October 2001, addressed to the peoples and Governments of the West, President Saddam Hussein stated that the world needs justice and equity, not the use of force because of potential and opportunity.

The most meaningful lesson we must learn is the one about God's directives. If we disagree on the understanding of God's directives, then what we like for ourselves should not prevent us from allowing others to like and enjoy what they choose. What we do not want for ourselves, what we reject, should not compel us to apply double standards against others.

We should all realize that a wealthy person cannot lead a secure life in the midst of a hungry society. His or her misfortune will be worse if he or she exploits the hungry, increasing his or her fortune at their expense.

The Secretary-General's report refers to many activities conducted within the framework of the United Nations in the area of support for the concept of dialogue among civilizations. Yet now more than ever, the world needs the United Nations and its institutions to redouble their activities to encourage dialogue and deal with the recently emerging trends that call for classifying civilizations and religions in a manner that impedes all human or civilizational dialogue and promotes conflict among civilizations.

We look forward to the day when the United Nations, as the main forum that voices the concepts of the civilized world, can make this cultural diversity the basis of interaction in order to achieve the mutual enrichment of all human civilizations.

Over the ages, Arab and Islamic civilizations have embodied the concept of dialogue among civilizations. Given the daunting challenges ahead, the Arab and Islamic nations are prepared today to continue their historic mission of carrying out interaction with other civilizations in an atmosphere of respect for the cultural diversity of all peoples, belief in the inevitability of cultural exchanges and rejection of the concepts of arrogance, pride, aggression and foreign occupation.

Mr. Alcalay (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me first express our gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Iran for having taken the initiative of promoting dialogue among civilizations in such a suitable place as the United Nations. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and his Personal Representative, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, for their work to promote this topic and to give it priority on the Organization's agenda.

The commemoration of the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations shows that this is a topic that belongs to each and every one of us and in which we must participate actively. Today, when the very concept of dialogue is threatened by unjustifiable actions and motivations that are beyond rational comprehension, it is more important now than ever to look at the United Nations role in promoting understanding of various ways of seeing life. Fortunately, this was recognized when the Secretary-General and the United Nations were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. There can be no doubt that understanding among nations is nothing other than peace — peace with a capital letter.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan promoted this vision when he observed in his report (*A/56/523, para. 15*), that

> "the United Nations remains the natural home of dialogue among civilizations; the forum where such dialogue can flourish and bear fruit in every field of human endeavour. Without this dialogue taking place every day among all nations — within and between civilizations, cultures and groups — no peace can be lasting and no prosperity can be secure."

Beyond our linguistic, ethnic, religious or cultural differences, the very essence of the human being — the essential value of humanity as a whole — continues to be the guiding light and the common denominator that characterizes us and distinguishes us from other living beings. It is this essence, imbued with the desire for peace and the harmony among nations, that inspired the creation of this Organization and is the point of departure for dialogue among civilizations.

More than 500 years ago, the course of history changed with the encounter of two worlds. This fact marked the identity of what today is Latin America, which is characterized by its rich diversity, giving it a specific historic personality. Diverse mixtures of peoples have been superimposed on this identity, which has sometimes complicated its achievements. The process of mixing peoples, far from being static, has today taken on a dynamic that, while surprising, remains fragile.

In accordance with the United Nations decision to consider 2001 as the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and because of the personal interest in this topic of our own President, Hugo Chávez Frías, at the beginning of this year, the Government of Venezuela began to take the initiative to promote activities and meetings both at the national and at the regional level, which addressed the idea of dialogue among civilizations.

Among other activities that are planned is the important meeting of Latin American and Caribbean countries that will soon be taking place in Caracas, from 13 to 16 November — of course, we will bring the conclusions of that meeting to the attention of the General Assembly. The purpose of the meeting is to promote various forums for sustained reflection throughout the region, to prompt debate and to study the changes that affect us on the cultural level, just as has occurred in other regions of the world within the framework that has taken shape as we carry on this dialogue among civilizations.

We have to reclaim cultural diversity as a constructive contribution to meeting the serious contemporary challenges as well as a way to deal with the risks of homogenization that are inherent in globalization. The Caracas meeting will also demonstrate the interest of the Latin American and Caribbean region in contributing in an proactive way to the worldwide dialogue here in the United Nations, and reaffirm the need for us to redouble our efforts to achieve international peace and cooperation.

The phenomenon of globalization brings with it an instrument of and an increase in international relations and greater interaction among various cultures, which can yield great benefits. It is a process that not only relates to economic, financial and technological areas, but is increasingly taking on a marked cultural dimension. It poses a tremendous challenge to us — the preservation of and respect for the rich intellectual and cultural diversities of our peoples.

This is one of the conditions that we have to fulfil in order to achieve the balance we need to take up this challenge, so that globalization itself can benefit us. As was indicated in this world programme of Dialogue among Civilizations, information technology must be used to promote the message of dialogue and understanding throughout the whole world in order to disseminate historical examples of constructive interaction among various civilizations. The current circumstances in the world have done nothing but

confirm all the more the relevance of promoting and activating such dialogue.

Allow me to refer to what was said by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela, Mr. Luis Alfonso Dávila, in the context of activities relating to the International Year that are taking place here and also in Caracas. He said the national preparatory meetings for the regional summit, which are taking place right now, must be turned into a new mindset that accepts diversity. This is the key to our action. We have to accept ourselves as being different. This is how we can project unity. Such diversity must be perceived as constituting an opportunity to recognize what is new and what is different, not as a threatening challenge to our own values and distinctiveness. Dialogue among civilizations must be founded on the belief that the humanist spirit can transcend obstacles caused by ignorance and prejudice.

In conclusion, it is the inherent right of the human being to be different from others and to live in peace with his fellow man — this is the best kind of humanitarian dialogue that we can reaffirm in this forum.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation welcomes this important debate on the subject of dialogue among civilizations. We are grateful for the report of the Secretary-General, which, while brief, is lucid and focused in its presentation of the subject. We acknowledge the role and contribution of the Secretary-General's Personal Representative, Mr. Picco, and the Group of Eminent Persons in this regard.

The convening of this debate is most timely indeed in the wake of the 11 September terrorist attacks against the United States and the stereotyping of terrorism with a particular group of people or religion, in some circles. This stereotyping is very unfortunate, and we are therefore profoundly grateful to President Bush and other Western leaders in their very categorical rejection of the identification of Islam and Muslims with terrorism. Islam stands for peace and seeks peace through civilized interaction and dialogue among peoples and nations. This is evident from the first and last words of greetings or salutations by Muslims, "*Assalamu alaikum*" or "Peace be upon you". Clearly, the heinous acts carried out on 11 September by people who were identified as Muslims have tarnished the good name of this great world religion and have done a great disservice to it. Islam has been hijacked by a group of desperate and misguided people in pursuance of their own political and personal agendas.

Some years ago, a Western scholar, Samuel Huntington, alarmed the world when he suggested that the development of world politics was heading towards a clash of civilizations, specifically between Western and Islamic civilizations. Whatever the motivations of Professor Huntington were in making that prediction, he himself said in a recent interview that he would not wish to see the fulfilment of that prophecy in the wake of the 11 September terrorist attacks, and he has called for a constructive dialogue between the West and the Islamic world.

A clash between these two major world civilizations, each of which has given so much to humanity, would be a great tragedy for the entire world. It must be avoided at all costs. It was for this purpose, and to create greater understanding among civilizations — particularly between Islam, which is very misunderstood, especially in the West, and the other world civilizations — that the Islamic Republic of Iran, under the leadership of President Seyed Mohammad Khatami, initiated this civilizational dialogue process, which led to the adoption of the Tehran Declaration of May 1999 and culminated here in the designation of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. For this we are profoundly grateful to Iran and its farsighted and inspired leadership.

It is a sad commentary on human affairs that, in spite of the advances made in science and technology, humankind remains prisoner to the ancient prejudices and suspicions of our ancestors, as evidenced by the stereotyping and caricaturizing of other peoples, religions and cultures in every country and society simply because of differences in skin colour, facial features, customs and religions. Herein lies the importance of the process we have launched at the United Nations with the proclamation of 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, which, if pursued conscientiously and in the spirit in which it was conceived, will have positive and far-reaching effects on human society.

The United Nations has a direct interest in the success of this dialogue among civilizations for the simple reason that the process will contribute to greater understanding among countries and peoples, thereby

contributing in a concrete way to world peace. It is a process in which the Organization is a natural constituency and a major stakeholder. It is a confidence-building measure par excellence that can be an important factor in efforts of the United Nations to forge global understanding and harmony in the context of a better and more peaceful world. In fact, at the sectoral level, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is very much involved in this process. We commend and continue to encourage its efforts in this regard.

The initiative and efforts to promote civilizational dialogue should be strongly supported by the international community. Indeed, given the gulf of differences and prejudices that exist among human civilizations even into this twenty-first century, there should be not just a Year of Dialogue among Civilizations but a decade or decades or even a century of dialogue among civilizations.

To a large extent, the failure to recognize the importance of constructive dialogue and interaction among peoples has led to the eruption of ethnic or religious conflicts in countries that had seemingly been united and cohesive for decades. As a multiracial and multireligious nation, Malaysia is fully conscious of the inherent risks of rupture in the social fabric, which has, in fact, occurred and traumatized us in the past.

Fortunately, drawing upon the lessons of the past, we have been able to forge a united nation out of our diversity through policies that propagate tolerance and understanding among our people of diverse ethnicity, cultures and religions. We are mindful that in a country where Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and other religions coexist in general harmony, the balancing of ethnic, religious and cultural sensitivities cannot be taken for granted. Cross-cultural and religious dialogues are consciously nurtured, promoted and strived for. Together, the different ethnic, cultural and religious groups have been able to harness their combined strength for economic uplifting and nation-building, while not forgetting their spiritual development.

Since then the Government has made great efforts to ensure that there is racial and religious harmony in the country through dialogue and interaction among the different ethnic groups in Malaysia, beginning at the school level, in the context of building a united Malaysian nation. In this regard, the Government has taken a number of institutional measures, such as establishing the Ministry of National Unity, the Institute of Islamic Understanding and the Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, as well as other forums devoted to cross-cultural interaction, activities and dialogue among the people. We believe that through these policies and measures Malaysia will continue to be a nation that lives up to the concept of unity in diversity.

It is indeed heartening to note in the report of the Secretary-General that major events and activities have been organized to support the international Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We commend the Governments of Austria, Germany, Japan, Uzbekistan, Lithuania and others who have been in the forefront to promote the theme of dialogue among civilizations in various related programmes. We congratulate the School of Diplomacy and International Relations of Seton Hall University for having been selected as the secretariat for one of the most significant projects of the 2001 United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. The United Nations University has also organized a series of workshops, conferences and other events, including an essay contest for children, entitled "Dialogue Beyond Borders".

In the aftermath of the tragic events of 11 September, it is now more important than ever that we take concrete steps to promote further dialogue and understanding among peoples and civilizations and to achieve as soon as possible the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration, which stands as a testimony to the renewed global commitment for peace and development.

My delegation welcomes the fact that the Secretary-General's report has highlighted the important nexus between the dialogue among civilizations and globalization. Globalization presents both challenges to and opportunities for the process of civilizational dialogue. It is up to us, the international community, to meet the challenges and exploit the opportunities in the interest of ensuring that globalization will contribute to the strengthening and consolidation, not to the weakening, of human civilization. Malaysia entirely agrees with the Secretary-General that it is

> "critical that globalization not reflect the triumph or victory of one ideology or cultural or economic system over another". (*A/56/523, para. 16*)

We all must ensure that the benefits of globalization are more equally distributed so that the injustices that are so often linked to the process are not seen to be affecting only certain groups of people. Globalization and dialogue among civilizations should go hand in hand; the latter can help to ease the frictions that may be engendered by the former.

The President returned to the Chair.

Too often, we have seen how misunderstanding and distortions about a nation, culture or individual have led to suspicion, mistrust, fear and prejudice, culminating in intolerance, misunderstanding, conflict and even war. It is thus important for the international community to begin in a concerted and coordinated way to promote, encourage and facilitate dialogue and understanding between various cultures and civilizations, thereby promoting peace, tolerance and cooperation.

Towards that end, my delegation considers the draft global agenda for dialogue among civilizations that has been submitted for our consideration to be a serious, forward-looking and concrete effort in that direction. We fully endorse the contents of the draft resolution, in particular its ambitious but realistic programme of action. The successful implementation of the programme of action will depend on the commitment of and effort made by all Member States. However, the United Nations has a vital role and interest in ensuring its success for, after all, the concept of dialogue is congruent with the basic purposes and principles of the United Nations. Indeed, dialogue — which includes discussions and negotiations among representatives of nations — is the raison d'être of this Organization.

Mr. Manalo (Philippines): We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and we thank the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its initiative in advancing our discussion on this important item. It is very timely that, this year, we are celebrating the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

The terrorist attacks on 11 September and the subsequent loss of human lives are a constant reminder that peace continues to elude us. Though the attack manifested the worst of humankind, it triggered a wake-up call for the international community on the need to strengthen dialogue, to advance cooperation and to strengthen the foundations of our common aspirations for the future of mankind.

My country has had its share of adversity and we have resorted to dialogue as a means of breaking geographic, cultural and social barriers. The Philippines has a rich but culturally diverse society; hence, the necessity of dialogue to promote national unity. Our Government has launched programmes and projects formulated through constructive dialogues to enhance understanding and mutual esteem among our people of varying ethnicity, cultures and languages. These programmes have not only improved our appreciation of the values, symbols, meanings and expressions distinguishing these different cultures in the country, but have also helped to sustain cooperation and respect within communities. A similar process is needed at the global level.

However, in the Philippines as in other parts of the world, there remains an urgent need to ensure that we do not retreat from the process of cultural or civilizational dialogue, tolerance and respect. Elements in our society continue to sow distrust by emphasizing differences in ethnicity and/or religion as reasons to promote violence rather than understanding and cooperation.

When our heads of State came together last year for the Millennium Summit, they reaffirmed the need for dialogue as the way to preserve peace. They shared a vision that the international community must advance towards a world of peace, security, stability and prosperity. To prevent more conflicts in the future, it is increasingly evident that dialogue among civilizations is essential. As the Secretary-General has said,

> "we must be able to take care to promote dialogue without creating new boundaries, and advance cooperation without stifling integration".

The United Nations continues to be the bedrock upon which the dialogue among civilizations should take place. Over the years, progress has been made in this area because this Organization has helped promote tolerance and understanding. It has the potential of taking further concrete steps in demonstrating how dialogue can bind us rather than polarize us. The various international conferences and exchanges on promoting dialogue among civilizations held this year can yield practical steps towards this end. In this regard, we welcome the launching of the book *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations* by

Mr. Picco and the eminent persons appointed by the Secretary-General, since it tackles the new paradigm of global relations through dialogue.

Some have noted that, since the 11 September attacks, our world faces a more uncertain future. This need not necessarily be true. However, the temptation for exclusionism and mistrust remains strong. We must resist this temptation by working vigorously to heal real and perceived differences. Bridging cultural divides through dialogue and cooperation remains the best way of doing so.

We must eschew the "us" and "them" syndrome and the stereotyping of people and cultures. Isaiah Berlin wrote that one source of conflict is stereotypes. Neighbours hate neighbours by whom they feel threatened and they rationalize their fears by representing them as wicked or superior. But stereotypes are just a substitute for real knowledge, only generalized images and stimuli to disdain of other nations and cultures.

Drawing from a pool of different cultures and civilizations, we are bound together by the urgent need to address our shared burdens: the deprivation and indignity of poverty, the vast pockets of underdevelopment, the degradation of the environment, the existence of conflict and the silent cry of the victims of famine and disease. The need to address these universal challenges transcends cultural differences.

Let us not forget that the purpose of the celebration of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations is to embrace the interdependence of humankind and its rich cultural diversity. The choice before us is clear: We must endeavour to work together in dealing with the common scourges that continue to plague our world. The globalization of economic and cultural forces and increasing interdependence only reinforce the necessity of dialogue and cooperation so that the benefits of globalization are not limited to the few.

As another well-known writer has argued, all cultures are involved in one another, none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic. No one can deny cultural geographies and differences in languages, but there seems to be no reason except fear and prejudice to keep on insisting on their separation and distinctiveness. Recognizing that will go a long way towards harnessing the dialogue among civilizations as a means to create a future of peace and prosperity for all.

Mr. Kadirgamar (Sri Lanka): On behalf of Sri Lanka, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. You are the Minister for Foreign Affairs of an Asian country, the Republic of Korea, with which Sri Lanka has long had the very best of relations. You have the fullest cooperation of the delegation of Sri Lanka, and I wish you the greatest success in all your endeavours in guiding the destiny of this Assembly.

Allow me also to congratulate President Khatami and the Government of Iran on their most praiseworthy initiative in urging the General Assembly to proclaim 2001 the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. When this idea was first mooted in 1998, there were those who wondered whether that initiative could lead to any practical results. Today, I do not think a single dissenting voice can be heard. Indeed, the terrible events that occurred in this very city two months ago have underscored dramatically the paramount need for the world to commence and sustain a serious and informed dialogue among civilizations.

Throughout the history of mankind, religion has divided man. Religion has put man against man. Religion has led to the most abominable crimes committed in the long history of warfare. It has led to intolerance, bigotry, ignorance and superstition. Yet religion should be the great unifying force in the lives of men. The search for truth should be illuminated by the teachings of the great religions of the world. And so it would be, if we approached religion — the religions of other peoples — with an open mind and an attitude of respect.

In Sri Lanka, four of the great religions of the world — Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity — coexist, and have coexisted for many centuries, in constructive harmony. In every city and deep in the countryside of Sri Lanka, Buddhist temples, Hindu kovils, mosques and Christian churches exist side by side.

It was therefore with confidence that Sri Lanka proposed in 1998 that the Day of Vesak — the day on which, according to tradition, Gauthama, the Buddha, was born, achieved enlightenment and passed away — be observed in the United Nations system. The draft

resolution to that end was presented by Sri Lanka and sponsored by 34 other States — Christian, Buddhist, Muslim and socialist — from across the globe. Thus, the international community united to honour the name and the teachings of one of the great spiritual leaders of mankind. The Buddha was a prince of peace. He preached tolerance, love and compassion. His message, enunciated 2,500 years ago, brought solace, peace of mind and understanding of the human condition — initially to millions of people in South Asia, East Asia and South-East Asia, and now to hundreds of millions of people all over the world.

I wish today to raise for our consideration the issue of the place of religion in the dialogue of civilizations, for it is religion that has underpinned all civilizations from time immemorial. I believe that we at the United Nations, where all nations assemble, and where all nations jointly seek to address the common problems of mankind, must focus our attention on bringing to the peoples of the earth greater awareness of the similarities in the teachings of the great religions of the world. Then we will realize that religious beliefs should, indeed, unite the peoples of the earth and inform them in their common search for truth, rather than divide and confuse the followers of each faith.

Unfortunately, for most people, faith in their own religion seems to kill even interest in other religions. The followers of each religion feel called upon to make their religion an article of export. They would drive all souls into the same spiritual enclosure. They are unaware of the great loss to humanity which would follow the imposition of any common creed on all. The supersession of the different religious traditions would make this world a poor place. Have we the right to destroy what we have not learned to appreciate? It is spiritual vandalism to drag into the dust what is precious to the soul of a people — what has been laboriously built up by the wisdom of ages.

In the course of a series of lectures delivered at Oxford between 1936 and 1938, Professor Radhakrishnan, the eminent Indian philosopher — the first Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at the University of Oxford, and later President of the Republic of India — demonstrated, with abundant citations from the ancient texts, that the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as recounted in the Gospels bears a striking resemblance to the life and teachings of Gauthama the Buddha.

Similarly, there are many parallels between Krishna and Jesus. As with the teachings of the Buddha and Jesus, a comparison of the Bhagavad Gita with the Koran reveals striking similarities, although those two scriptures are separated by perhaps as much as 1,000 years.

If the great religions continue to waste their energies in a fratricidal war, instead of looking upon themselves as friendly partners in the supreme task of nourishing the spiritual life of mankind, the swift advance of secular humanism and moral materialism is assured. In a restless and disordered world which is unbelieving to an extent which we do not sufficiently realize, and where sinister superstitions are staking their rival claims to the allegiance of men, we cannot afford to waver in our determination that the whole of humanity shall remain a united people, where Muslim and Christian, Buddhist and Hindu shall stand together, bound by common devotion, not to something behind, but to something ahead, not to a racial past or a geographical unit, but to a great dream of a world society with a universal religion of which the historical faiths are but branches. We must recognize, humbly, the partial and defective character of our isolated traditions and seek their source in the generic tradition from which they have all sprung. Among the great religions there are similarities and dissimilarities. Does it not behove us to promote unity among them rather than to perpetuate division?

Each religion has sat at the feet of teachers who have never bowed to its authority; this process is taking place today on a scale that is unprecedented in the history of humanity, and this will have most profound effects upon religion. In their wide environment, religions are assisting each other to find their own souls and grow to their full stature. Owing to a cross-fertilization of ideas and insights, behind which lie centuries of racial and cultural tradition and earnest endeavour, a great unification is taking place in the deeper fabric of men's thoughts. Unconsciously, perhaps, respect for other points of view, appreciation of the treasures of other cultures and confidence in one another's unselfish motives are growing. We are slowly realizing that we need believers with different opinions and convictions in order to work out the larger synthesis which alone can give the spiritual basis to a world brought together into intimate oneness by man's mechanical ingenuity.

We must endorse, support and take forward the initiative of Iran in this Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. The United Nations has an immensely valuable role to play in that process.

Mr. Moreno (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are beginning the millennium with the celebration of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, an excellent initiative that we owe to President Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Yet this is also the year of the barbarous terrorist acts of 11 September, and the one in which the civilian population of one of the poorest countries on earth — in addition to the serious violence it has experienced in the last 20 years — is being severely affected by intensive aerial bombardment.

It has therefore never been as important as it is today for there to be a true dialogue among civilizations that can bring about mutual understanding, tolerance, coexistence and international cooperation. One of the great challenges before the United Nations is to promote a positive perception of diversity and to enhance the role of the United Nations as the appropriate forum for dialogue in all spheres of human activity.

Unfortunately, we remain far from achieving that objective. International reality shows that those who brandish global power and wealth, particularly the hegemonic Power, do not have the political will to promote true equal opportunity and real justice for all human beings of all nations, ethnic groups, cultures and religions. They are even less able to promote the solution of very complex international problems by means of a dialogue that makes it possible for interlocutors of all nations and groups of countries to be considered on an equal footing.

Real possibilities for underdeveloped countries — which are the vast majority of the world — to have an effective voice in international decisions are ever more distant. How can those countries participate effectively in international relations when for them poverty and hunger are spreading, development potential is diminishing, millions of people are dying from curable diseases and illiteracy rates are not being reduced?

The 1.3 billion people living in absolute poverty in the third world, the 200 million malnourished children under the age of 5, the 130 million children who do not have access to education and the 840 million illiterate adults in the countries of the southern hemisphere continue to live in hopelessness. For there to be a solution there will have to be considerable improvement in international cooperation and serious consideration will have to be given to the voice of those countries belonging to that forgotten world. If it is not recognized that the poverty, underdevelopment, social exclusion, economic disparity, instability and insecurity that affect millions of people have been the result of historical injustices that can be overcome only through a serious commitment to international cooperation, we will never break out of the vicious circle of marginalization, death, suffering and violence. If we do not break out of that vicious circle, there will be no diversity. If there is no diversity, there will be no effective dialogue among civilizations.

Our Organization must become the framework that brings about diversity — including political, ideological and cultural diversity — and that makes a decisive contribution to changing the unfair, unequal and exclusive order. The United Nations should be the framework that sets up a true and expansive dialogue among civilizations and cultures. It must become the guarantor of that diversity, and of ending the imposition of cultural and ideological values. It must tear down barriers to truly fruitful dialogue.

However, we are very far from that. Opting for the path of war to combat terrorism, as despicable and condemnable as it may be, has cheated the United Nations of its function of peace and dialogue, which are its reason for being. Instead of creating the conditions for a fitting and fruitful dialogue among civilizations, that choice can also lead to new conflicts, differences and instances of intolerance that will create additional barriers to our goal.

Dispelling any notion of cultural or ideological superiority based on racism, racial or other discrimination, xenophobia or intolerance should be a corollary to a dialogue among civilizations. For instance, we believe that the World Conference against Racism, which was held recently in Durban, South Africa, is an example of how we should identify phenomena that must be overcome by means of a comprehensive and wide-ranging dialogue. We hope that the General Assembly will take this aspect into account when it comes time to reach conclusions on this topic.

In conclusion, I can assure the Assembly of the full cooperation of my country in achieving the

objectives of the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and in enshrining respect, tolerance and recognition of multiculturalism as the undisputed ways of achieving those objectives.

The President: In accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 40th plenary meeting, on 8 November 2001, I now call on the observer of the Holy See, Archbishop Renato Martino.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): My delegation wishes to express its gratitude and appreciation to President Khatami for the laudable and timely initiative to promote dialogue and understanding among peoples.

My delegation also wishes to express its appreciation to Mr. Giandomenico Picco, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General. I hope that the book *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*, which is the fruit of his efforts, will be translated into many languages so that it can become a good instrument of dialogue.

In his message for the World Day of Peace celebrated on 1 January this year, Pope John Paul II wrote of the urgent need "to reflect on the theme of dialogue between cultures and traditions", with this dialogue being

> "the obligatory path to the building of a reconciled world, a world able to look with serenity to its own future. This is a theme which is crucial to the pursuit of peace ... [T]he United Nations Organization has called attention to this urgent need by declaring 2001 the 'International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations'".

The impact of the brutal and unprecedented attacks of 11 September are forcing all of us to consider the urgency of the dialogue among civilizations and to intensify our hopes as this International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations draws to a close. To do anything less would only allow for the perversion of the very idea of civilization. As the recently published report of the Secretary-General on this agenda item indicates, "A dialogue among civilizations is not only a necessary answer to terrorism — it is in many ways its nemesis" (*A/56/523, para. 19*), and the very existence of this Organization is a testament to the deep human desire for justice and peace. The terrorist attacks must make the United Nations not only reconsider, but also recommit and resolve itself to, this dialogue.

In last year's resolution on the dialogue among civilizations, the General Assembly noted

> "that civilizations are not confined to individual nation-States, but rather encompass different cultures within the same civilization, and ... that civilizational achievements constitute the collective heritage of humankind, providing a source of inspiration and progress for humanity at large". (*Resolution 55/23, third preambular paragraph*)

In recognizing the plurality and relatedness of the world's cultures and civilizations, this body thus admitted the vital role that culture, as a subset of each civilization, must play in the drama that is every human life.

"The main concern of culture in general and of all culture is education." Addressing man in his moral, intellectual and spiritual capacities, authentic culture is rooted in the search for ultimate truth. In the recesses of his heart, man seeks to discover both his origins and his ultimate destiny. In many respects, culture is the means by which whole communities of people come to meet God and to ask life's fundamental questions. It is this common search for truth that forms the basis of culture: "At the heart of every culture lies the attitude man takes to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God."

As personal as this search is to the human heart, it naturally expresses itself in and through the customs and traditions of whole communities of people who, through their relative proximity to one another, have sought the ultimate meaning of life together as a people. The first experience of living together is found in the family, a universal experience whose importance can hardly be overstated. The family provides the basis of an essential relationship between the individual and one's origins. In the family, individuals also come to maturity through receptive openness to others and through generous self-giving to them.

Moreover, there is a close connection between the particular culture of a people and its identity as a nation. "History shows that in extreme circumstances ... it is precisely its culture that enables a nation to survive the loss of political and economic independence." Not even the powerful ideological systems of colonialism and totalitarianism were able, and neither will terrorism be able, to suppress the universal need for a particular and unique cultural life.

It may seem that any particular culture that is taken seriously raises strong and definitive claims to truth: in a sense, each culture may say that its way is the way, to the exclusion of all others. This determination may even seem to give cultures a certain force. Yet such overly simplistic claims have led, and, sadly, continue to lead, to strife and conflict between peoples, not to mention the number of inhuman and barbarous acts against human dignity, dubiously justified in the name of "culture". All cultures must bear some relationship to freedom and truth. Fanaticism and fundamentalism cannot be equated with the search for truth itself.

A true dialogue between cultures requires a respect for differences. Much too often, both in history and at the present time, ethnic and religious differences have been used as a justification for brutal conflict, genocide and persecution. There have also been problems in which one religious group has sought to expel members of another religion from a country, often with threats and actual violence. Authentic culture cannot be built upon the practice of religious persecution. Such a so-called culture stands diametrically opposed to the human person and will eventually lead to the disintegration of society.

Meaningful dialogue among civilizations cannot take place in the absence of religious freedom. The cultures of the world, with all of their rich diversity of gifts, have much to contribute to the building up of a civilization of love. What is required is mutual respect for differences among cultures — respect inspired by the desire to uphold the right of all individuals to seek the truth in accordance with the dictates of their conscience and in continuity with their cultural heritage.

Human beings are not enslaved by the past. They cannot disregard the past or recreate themselves in any way they wish, but they do have the capacity to discern and choose how they should live, both as individuals and together. They are free enough to accept the limitations imposed by various historical, cultural, economic or other conditions. These conditions may constrain but cannot abolish their freedom. As a part of human nature, freedom, especially the freedom to choose dialogue and peace, is always possible.

After the recognition of a variety of cultures and civilizations, one is bound to ask: what unifies mankind? The answer proposed — and affirmed by the United Nations — has been those universal rights which human beings enjoy by the very fact of their humanity. It was precisely outrages against human dignity which led the United Nations Organization to formulate, barely three years after its establishment, that Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which remains one of the highest expressions of the human conscience of our time.

As Pope John Paul II stated in his address to the General Assembly in 1995:

> "These are not abstract points; rather, these rights tell us something important about the actual life of every individual and of every social group. They also remind us that we do not live in an irrational or meaningless world. On the contrary, there is a moral logic which is built into human life and which makes possible dialogue between individuals and peoples. If we want a century of violent coercion to be succeeded by a century of persuasion, we must find a way to discuss the human future intelligibly. The universal moral law written on the human heart is precisely that kind of grammar which is needed if the world is to engage this discussion of its future." (*A/50/PV.20, p. 3*)

My delegation would like to conclude with a final reflection on the relationship between civilization and recognition of the value and dignity of human life. No authentic dialogue can take place if it fails to respect life. There can be no peace or dialogue among civilizations when this fundamental right is not protected. There have been many examples of generosity, dedication, even heroism in the service of life in our time. Yet the world is still plagued by a number of attacks on life. When the human dignity of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society is not duly recognized, respected and protected, all civilizations suffer.

Yet again, despite these terrible practices and the recent crises, mankind must not be discouraged. The very idea of dialogue presupposes our ability to reason and understand, and especially to change and make anew. The Holy See has full confidence that a true dialogue among civilizations will serve to benefit all.

The President: In accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 40th plenary meeting, on 8 November 2001, I now call on the Observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Over the course of its history, Switzerland has had to invent and constantly reinvent ways of living together. The coexistence of different cultures, religions and traditions does not just happen but, instead, requires constant effort. Now that the world has become what is commonly called a global village, what is true within our borders is equally true beyond them. That is why Switzerland immediately felt it must respond to Iran's initiative of the dialogue among civilizations. From the beginning, Switzerland wanted to contribute to the realization of this great idea, hoping to put its relevant experience at the service of others.

The tragic events of 11 September and their consequences further emphasized, if it were necessary, the importance of this dialogue: it must take a central role today if we are to prevent a worsening of the lack of understanding and prejudices existing between our civilizations, which some might exploit.

First, allow me to make some general observations on this subject.

Norms, values, religions and traditions define a civilization as they create a collective identity and a shared feeling of belonging. These norms and the feeling of belonging also help structure the personal identity of individuals, who know their way around and understand each other inside their collective society. Accordingly, we can see how strongly individuals identify with the society in which they live. The dialogue among civilizations therefore concerns each of us.

However, personal identities and civilizations are not fixed quantities. Societies invent and reinvent themselves. They reshape their conceptions of the world. They do this not only independently but also, if not mostly, in response to one another. This ongoing process can be destabilizing. That explains the tendency towards isolation, the rejection of the other and the rejection of others' civilization and values, which are sometimes interpreted as threatening or incompatible with one's own vision of the world.

That is why dialogue is necessary in order to abate as much as possible the lack of understanding that fuels resentment, which can in turn lead to conflicts between different civilizations.

It seems to me that human civilizations have more points in common than fundamental differences. Those similarities are even more evident in an age when reciprocal influences are increasing. So, should not one of the principal goals of the dialogue we wish to undertake be to give more prominence to the constituent elements of humanity's common heritage? Respect for human dignity and the fundamental rights of humankind are undoubtedly a key element of this common heritage.

Dialogue among civilizations, a factor that is key to peace and security — indeed, 2001 is the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations — is, for Switzerland, of utmost importance. It is too important to remain simply a concept or a vague aspiration; it must be translated into reality. For this Year of Dialogue truly to effect change, it will have to make itself felt in the everyday lives of our countries' citizens. With this goal in mind, Switzerland has for several years endeavoured to encourage dialogue between people of different civilizations and religions, specifically between Christians and Muslims.

Allow me to recall certain of our initiatives.

In response to President Khatami's proposal, Switzerland launched, in cooperation with Iran, a project involving dialogue between the citizens of our two countries. That project addresses the role of women in the education, communications, health-care and legal fields. Its goal is to promote an ongoing exchange of ideas and information between the civil societies of our countries. Furthermore, at the opening of the annual session of the Economic and Social Council, Iran and Switzerland decided to express symbolically their cooperation by organizing in Geneva a joint concert by the National Orchestra of Iran and the Geneva Chamber Orchestra, which performed together the works of Iranian and Western composers.

This year, Switzerland also backed and helped to organize in Algiers, together with the Algerian Government, a symposium on St. Augustine, who was born and lived in what today is Algeria. Together with the Algerian authorities, Muslim and Christian associations took the floor, as did scientists and researchers of various nationalities. Other related cultural activities were also held, such as exhibitions and concerts, which ensured the tangible impact of this initiative.

It is clear, then, that Switzerland, through these initiatives, intends to promote the implementation of concrete projects. I can assure the Assembly that

Switzerland will continue to encourage and support a dialogue among individuals and societies during these difficult times.

Our country's history has convinced us that there is no alternative to an ongoing attempt to reach consensus through dialogue, on the basis of respect for differences and for the identity of the other. Hence we are convinced that the world must become increasingly aware, through dialogue, of the richness that its differences give it.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/18 of 10 November 1978 and decision 53/453 of 18 December 1998, I now call on the observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Mr. Bouabid (International Organization of la Francophonie) (*spoke in French*): In 1999, at the eighth Conference of Heads of State and Government of Countries Using French as a Common Language, held in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, la Francophonie chose the theme of "Dialogue among cultures" for its ninth Conference, which was to be held in Beirut from 26 to 28 October 2001. However, given the international situation prevailing in the wake of the events of 11 September, that Conference had to be postponed until next year.

This attests clearly to the keen interest shown by the French-speaking world in the proclamation by the General Assembly of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

For la Francophonie — a community of peoples and cultures from all continents — dialogue among civilizations, dialogue among cultures, and dialogue plain and simple are not exceptional occurrences, but everyday facts.

The promotion of an open-minded, pluralistic approach to culture and civilization has always been at the core of our community's concerns. Dialogue is the only way to cope with an international society in which the most diverse identities complement one another, to the benefit of one and all. It is only natural, therefore, that the Charter of la Francophonie enshrines as one of its fundamental goals the promotion and intensification of dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

For us, dialogue presupposes going beyond mere tolerance of diversity. We believe that it should be viewed, rather, as a constituent part of our own identity. This means also that we should perceive and appreciate individual characteristics as different aspects of that which is universal. Dialogue, inasmuch as it presumes equality despite differences, and convergence despite differences of opinion, aims — above and beyond an exchange that is merely verbal — to understand the other. Current events reaffirm — as if that were necessary — the need to continue along this path.

Guided by a very broad definition of culture, la Francophonie has sought to make dialogue among cultures into a specific project based on the full acceptance of differences in all aspects of life, including at the international level.

Among other things, it has endeavoured to devise new ways of working together towards coherence and harmony among cultures, in the context of shared complementarity. Indeed, many threats emanating from hegemonic aspirations are looming over various civilizations. A few powerful players — both public and private — are seeking to control legal and normative resources and to determine what is legitimate, while also attempting to fabricate an imaginary uniformity and to promote the homogenization of ways of being, behaving and consuming. The resurgence of identities has demonstrated, however, that humankind rejects uniformity. Globalization is leading us towards coexistence, and we welcome this. But this must not keep us from also living in our own, different ways.

To live ever closer to one another while deriving a mutual benefit from our differences: this is one of the major challenges of this new century. While some have felt compelled to predict inevitable confrontation, today it is clear that the international community is aware of the critical importance of dialogue among civilizations and of the full unfolding of the diversity of cultures.

The adoption last week by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity is proof of this. Article 1 of the Declaration, as the Assembly is aware, stipulates that

> "Cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and

should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations."

La Francophonie thus wishes to engage in this conceptual exercise along with the Arab world and with Portuguese, Spanish and Russian speakers, so that this debate can gradually be expanded to include all the members of the international community.

Thus, in the context of preparing for the Beirut summit, the International Organization of la Francophonie organized a variety of events related to a dialogue among cultures and civilizations, including the following, which I will use as an example.

On the occasion of International Francophonie Day, a symposium entitled "Three linguistic communities faced with the challenges of globalization" was held in Paris on 20 and 21 March last. That dialogue, which brought together the Portuguese-, Spanish- and French-speaking communities, was inaugurated by President Chirac of France, President Chissano of Mozambique and President Noboa Bejarano of Ecuador. Multiculturalism and identity, culture and the economy, and a scientific, knowledge-based society were the three themes that commanded the attention of those involved. Among its conclusions, the symposium strongly recommended elaborating an international instrument for the protection and promotion of cultural diversity.

Earlier on, in May 2000, another such event had already allowed for the inception of a dialogue with another linguistic community: the Arab world. A symposium organized by la Francophonie, the League of Arab States and the Arab World Institute, entitled "La Francophonie and the Arab world: a dialogue among cultures", made it possible to identify points of convergence and possibilities for synergy, notably to foster diversity, tolerance and the use of new information technologies among the communities involved.

Last month, again, during a seminar in Paris organized jointly by the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Council on the Russian Language — an agency of the Government of the Russian Federation — agreed to give priority to cultural diversity among the areas earmarked for cooperation between the two organizations in the future.

Finally, from 13 to 15 June of this year, la Francophonie held its third Ministerial Conference on Culture in Cotonou, Benin. The heads of State and Government of French-speaking countries entrusted that Conference with the mandate of exploring in greater depth the problems of globalization in terms of cultural diversity, as actually experienced by the members of our organization. By a declaration adopted on that occasion, la Francophonie reaffirmed the principle of the primacy of cultural diversity and its determination to adopt policies and instruments likely to foster that diversity.

The Ministers of the French-speaking countries also decided to support the proposal to draw up a universal international regulatory framework to promote cultural diversity, seeking thus to enshrine the right of Governments to maintain, establish and develop policies aimed at supporting cultural diversity.

The ninth Francophonie Summit, to be held next year in Beirut, will surely mark a high point, but it will not mark the end of the dialogue among cultures for la Francophonie. We will always cherish, on one hand, progress towards a better world and, on the other hand, safeguarding the cultural wealth of each of our societies.

For us, this is a current project, as well as a future one. It is a social project on a global scale; a project to achieve a society in which cultures and civilizations complement rather than exclude one another; in which they strengthen rather than dilute each other; and in which they become closer without becoming the same; a project with the final objective of a truly multipolar world, respectful of the most vulnerable and their right to solidarity, respectful of a truly democratic management of international relations.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 25.

I would like to announce that since the publication of draft resolution A/56/L.3, the following countries have become sponsors: Andorra, Australia, Belarus, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Madagascar, Maldives, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Qatar, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Slovakia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and the United States of America.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/56/L.3, entitled "Global agenda for dialogue among civilizations".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/56/L.3?

Draft resolution A/56/L.3 was adopted (resolution 56/6).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 25?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.40 p.m.